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Community of Singularities: Being-With in the Work of Heidegger, Lévinas and Derrida

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Thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the
University of Sussex

May 2014

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UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX
MARIA ALEXANDRA POPESCU
THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF
PHILOSOPHY
COMMUNITY OF SINGULARITIES: THE POSSIBILITY OF BEING-
WITH IN THE WORK OF HEIDEGGER, LÉVINAS AND DERRIDA
SUMMARY

The aim of this study is to attempt a re-conceptualisation of ethics and politics away from the well-rehearsed structure of singularity versus community, particularity or individuality versus universality, as well as from the inadequate dyadic positioning of these sets of terms. Dominant scholarship on Lévinas's and Derrida's work has generally been divided into those who see Derrida's work as continuing the Lévinasian legacy, and thus having little to offer to the political, and those who would like to divorce the trajectory of deconstruction from the Lévinasian heritage, and thus reveal it as being inherently political. The above split in opinion is largely based on a divergence in the interpretation of Lévinas's own writings as essentially about ethics, and therefore as either having little to offer to our thinking of the political, or as undergoing something like a 'split', with the focus coming to rest more clearly on politics through the figure of the third, in later writings.

My contribution to this impasse is to foreground a recent, though much overlooked notion within Jacques Derrida's work as an alternative to thinking being-with: that of community of singularities. I also suggest the notions of *alteronomy* and *fiendship* as alternatives to thinking being-with, which take into account the way in which the other-within-the-self restructures the concepts of freedom and autonomy and takes them beyond a humanist context. I will be arguing from two overarching points: a) that Lévinas's own work can convincingly be interpreted as not only *concerned* with the political from his earliest writings, but as setting up the political as the interruptive force within the ethical, thus providing a *shift in perspective* for what is essentially a mutually-interruptive relation between ethics and politics, and b) that Derrida's own writing need not be 'divorced' from Lévinas's trajectory of thought, in order to be considered as having something to offer to our re-thinking of the relation between ethics and politics.

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List of Abbreviations

Works by Lévinas:

B.T. *Being and Time*

E.E. *Existence and Existents*

‘E.T.’ ‘The Ego and the Totality’

O.B. *Otherwise Than Being*

O.E. *On Escape*

‘R.H.’ ‘Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism’

T.I. *Totality and Infinity*

Works by Derrida:

B.S. *The Beast and the Sovereign* (vol. 1)

P.F. *Politics of Friendship*

V.M. ‘Violence and Metaphysics’

For my family, natural and otherwise

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to the many people who have helped me during my studies in the past few years. My largest academic debt is to my supervisors, Tanja Staehler and Paul Davies. Tanja Staehler's support, in particular, has extended far beyond any academic guidance I could have hoped for. This thesis has been sponsored by the *Arts and Humanities Research Board*. I am also grateful for the highly stimulating and productive environment that the Royal Institute of Philosophy Research Seminars provided every Friday at Sussex University, for the duration of my Doctorate. In many ways, my family and extended family are the ones who have made this possible. I am particularly grateful to Mary and Philippe Leonidou, without whose multilayered support, this thesis would not have come into being. My gratitude to my family and the close friends who have supported me through this time is difficult to describe. Finally, I am grateful to my greatest non-human friend, my tomcat Ozzy, without whose unwavering loving presence my days and nights would have been unimaginably poorer over the last few years.

I. Introduction

Over the last few years, there has been an increase in the interest in Emmanuel Lévinas's work, and particularly on the relation between ethics and politics. This has been influenced, to a great extent, by Jacques Derrida's influential writings on Lévinas. There has also been a debate, extending over a considerable number of years, over the function of deconstruction, and whether one could speak of it as having any ethical import, on the one hand, and political import on the other. Commentators have generally been split between those who see Derrida's work as continuing the Lévinasian legacy, and thus having little to offer to the political, and those who would like to divorce the trajectory of deconstruction from the Lévinasian heritage, and thus reveal it as being inherently political. The above split in interpretation is largely based, though sometimes unacknowledged as such, on the divergence of interpretation of Lévinas's own writings as essentially about ethics, and therefore as either having little to offer to the political, or as undergoing something like a 'split' with the focus coming to rest more clearly on politics through the figure of the third, in later writings, such as *Otherwise than Being, or Beyond Essence*.¹

The Argument

In what follows, I will be arguing from two overarching points: a) that Lévinas's own work can convincingly be interpreted as not only *concerned* with the political from his earliest writings, but as a weaving of politics within ethics, as the interruptive element, and b) Derrida's own writing need not be 'divorced' from Lévinas's trajectory of thought, in order to be considered as having something to offer to our re-thinking of the relation between ethics and politics.

I will be arguing that Lévinas's writing does not undergo a shift, but changes perspective in the presentation of the two sides of the same argument, in spite of it looking, on the surface, as if he prioritises ethics. The political is set up as an interruptive force within the ethical in his earliest writings, and culminating in *Totality and Infinity*,² and the ethical as an interruptive force within

¹ Lévinas, *Otherwise Than Being*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 1998).

² Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969).

the political in his later work, *Otherwise than Being*.³ Throughout his work, Lévinas is providing a radically new definition of subjectivity, which might be seen as launching an ethical *quasi-phenomenology* of the subject.

The aim of this study is to attempt a re-conceptualisation of ethics and politics away from the well-rehearsed structure of singularity versus community, particularity or individuality versus universality, as well as from the inadequate dyadic positioning of these sets of terms. Instead, I foreground a recent, though much overlooked notion within Jacques Derrida's work as an alternative to thinking being-with: that of community of singularities.

I also suggest the notions of *alteronomy* and *fiendship* as alternatives to thinking being-with which take into account the way in which the other-within-the-self restructures the concept of freedom and takes it beyond a humanist context. After a brief incursion into what I take to be the context of the development of this notion in Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time*,⁴ I will be tracing Derrida's trajectory in his examination of the question of community of singularities through Emmanuel Lévinas's work. I analyse the relation between ethics and politics through three main Lévinasian texts: 'The Ego and the Totality', *Totality and Infinity*⁵ (henceforth, *T.I.*) and *Otherwise Than Being, or Beyond Essence* (henceforth, *O.B.*) and conclude that it should be understood as marked by a mutually-interruptive dynamic. That is, the ethical is set up as an interruptive force within the political in *Totality and Infinity*, and the political is set up as the necessary interruptive force within the ethical, in *Otherwise than Being*. Throughout this study, I shall be using the capitalized form of Other to refer to the specifically Lévinasian construal of it as the Other who faces me, and 'other' to refer to general otherness.

Contrary to dominant scholarship arguing that Lévinas's work undergoes something akin to a shift with *Otherwise than Being*, in that politics is broached directly, I argue that, with *O.B.*, Lévinas is shifting perspective and presenting what has always been a mutually-disruptive relation between ethics and politics, peace and war, from a different point of view, one which also requires him to place the emphasis on the need for a different vocabulary, one not available to phenomenology.

³ Lévinas, *Otherwise than Being*, *op. cit.*

⁴ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962).

⁵ Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity*, *op. cit.*

Thesis Structure

This study is divided into three parts. Part One briefly sketches the notion of the question, the call of conscience and singularity through an engagement with Derrida's reading of these phenomena in Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time*. The analysis in Chapter One will always occur with an eye to Lévinas, since it is through Lévinas that Derrida engages with Heidegger's text. I shall be arguing that an investigation into Heidegger's concepts of the question and the call, which are the target of Derrida's critique, *opens the way* into the understanding of subjectivity as the Lévinasian other-within-the-same. This could also be read as providing the chiasmus for Derrida's development of *différance* and singularity as based on the non-identity of the self with itself. Chapter Two problematises the Lévinasian 'passage' from ethics to politics, by proposing that the aforementioned 'leap' need not be perceived as an intractable difficulty, marking the apolitical nature of Lévinasian ethics, but, instead, requires renewed attention and analysis.

I argue, against accounts that the culmination of Lévinas's work in *Otherwise than Being* leads to political quietude, that a re-examination of the relation between ethics and politics evinces it as mutually-interruptive, with the political, in *O.B.*, being set up as a necessary disruptive supplement at the heart of ethics, just as ethics had been conceptualised as a disruptive force at the heart of war and politics in *Totality and Infinity*.

In Chapter Three, I follow the trace of Lévinas throughout Derrida's *Politics of Friendship* and reveal the Lévinasian concepts of the other-within-the-same and the third to underscore the conceptual structure of Derrida's argument. I argue that *Politics of Friendship* should be understood as a text on Lévinas, in spite of its structure being based around an engagement with thinkers other than Lévinas. My analysis will first focus on *Politics of Friendship*, though *Points...* and other works will also surface as alternative places for the argument, or, indeed, places where Derrida continues the argument opened by *Politics of Friendship*. The Derridean singularity emerges, having passed through Lévinasian transformations, as a self inherently split at its core, a self the other rends and renders heterogenous from within. This heterogeneity is what I suggest could be referred to as alteronomy, since the Lévinasian and Derridean analysis of the subject also complicates the understanding of it as a free and autonomous being.

Minimal Forms of Being-With

Minimal Community, minimal friendship and teleiopoetic friendship will surface, within the analysis of Derrida's *P.F.*, as alternatives to Nancy's and Blanchot's notion of 'community

without community’⁶ or ‘unavowable community’.⁷ Through his analysis of the Greek notion of friendship and engagements with other philosophers, friendship emerges as a spacing within which minimal community arises. After problematising the destabilising core at the heart of friendship and the Greek notion of *philia*, that of dissymmetry, separation and infinite distance that the other-within-the-Same represents, Derrida then turns to evincing democracy-to-come as the political form of being-with demanded by the ‘infinite heterogeneity’ and ‘dissymmetrical curving’ of the concept of the ‘minimal community’ of singularities.

As we shall see, the democracy-to-come is what is demanded by the curving within the social caused by the other-within-the-Same as friend. It is the necessary and compelling curvature of being-with that exceeds instantiation of any being-with as such, at the same time as calling for it.

Being-With as Responsivity

Captured within the positing of the question of friendship, of a being-with under the name of friendship, is the discursive determination of a being-with through the demand of the Other upon me, the call to responsible responsivity. The implicit demand of the prayer towards the self *from* the Other is that *I* (the *me*) should assume the possibility of a being-with under the name of friendship, whilst never instantiating it as such, whilst holding it at bay as a friendship-to-come. This is a responsibility I have already assumed, by being *me*, through singularisation, through being called to responsibility by the other-within-the-self determining singularity.

‘Messianic teleiopoiesis’ is the term Derrida employs as the structure, both temporal and spatial, of the following prayer/call/demand: ‘You-my-friends-be-my-friends-and-although-you-are-not-yet-my-friends-you-are-already,-since-that-is-what-I-am-calling-you’⁸. Naming thus simultaneously singularises and creates a community of singularities. It *performs* subjectivity in the same movement in which it appeals to its constantly future-directed transformation.

⁶ Jean-Luc Nancy *Being Singular Plural*, trans. Robert D. Richardson and Anne E. O’Byrne, (Stanford : Stanford University Press, 2000), Jean-Luc Nancy *The Inoperative Community*, trans. Peter Connor, Lisa Garbus, Michael Holland and Simona Sawhney (Minneapolis and Oxford: University of Minnesota Press, 1991) and Jean-Luc Nancy and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe *Retreating the Political*, trans. Simon Sparks (London: Routledge, 1997).

⁷ Maurice Blanchot, *The Unavowable Community*, trans. Pierre Joris, Barrytown (New York: Station Hill Press, 1988).

⁸ J. Derrida, *P.F.*, *op. cit.*, p.235.

The third party, in Derrida's *P.F.*, is structured in the same way as *différance*, *aporia* and what Derrida calls, in *Rogues*, 'figures of the unconditional without sovereignty'.⁹ Derrida explicitly refers to hospitality, the gift or forgiveness as 'figures of the unconditional without sovereignty'.¹⁰ However, I believe the case could convincingly be made, and will attempt do so in Chapter Three, that several, if not most of Derrida's concepts/figures subscribe to the same logic of the unconditional without sovereignty, including the 'messianic without messianism'.¹¹ Like Lévinas's concept of the third as the opening of the question of the political, Derrida's third party as the 'one *qua* more than one'¹² also seems to bring to mind Lévinas's concept of the third-within-the-eyes-of-the-other-in-the-same. According to Derrida, it 'simultaneously allows and limits calculability', that is, opens the question of the political as well as limits it, standing witness to a 'singular multiplicity' which always prevents the friend from being only one.¹³ Thirdness will also be discussed in Chapter Three, which will conclude on a discussion of the animal as the other-within-the-self, through Derrida's last seminar, published in two volumes as *The Beast and the Sovereign*.¹⁴ For, it is here that Derrida takes up the question of the animal in relation to sovereignty and the political. The beast emerges as a parallel figure to the friend in *Politics of Friendship*, opening the way to a thinking of community as a being-with-the-other-other-than-human.

This study is open to an acknowledgement of the risk entailed in opening the question of community in the first place, in writing it. It does so by tracing the work of Lévinas throughout *O.B.* and the enquiry into the question of friendship. Unlike Nancy's work, Derrida's community 'passes through' the much more exigent language of Lévinasian ethics and inscription of the self-other relation, which marks it with a heightened awareness and attention to the torsions that the history of the concept performs. The risk of recalling that very history

⁹ J. Derrida, *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*, trans. P. Brault and M. Naas (California: Stanford University Press, 2005) p.149. I shall not be pursuing this analysis here.

¹⁰ Derrida, *Rogues*, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

¹¹ Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International* (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 181.

¹² J. Derrida, *P.F.*, *op.cit.*, p. 215.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 215.

¹⁴ Derrida, Jacques *Séminaire: La bête et le souverain*, vol. 1: 2001-2002, ed. Michel Lisse, Marie-Louise Mallet, and Genette Michaud (Paris: Galilée, 2008), trans. Geoffrey Bennington as *The Beast and the Sovereign*, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009) and Derrida, Jacques *Séminaire: La bête et le souverain*, vol. 2: 2002-2003, ed. Michel Lisse, Marie-Louise Mallet, and Genette Michaud (Paris: Galilée, 2010) trans. Geoffrey Bennington as *The Beast and the Sovereign*, vol. 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

and ‘bringing a brother back’¹⁵ is a risk that, nonetheless, Derrida assumes, as do I, in this study, under the mark of necessity. The development of the question of community beyond the fraternal, beyond virility and beyond the human would call for ‘an altogether other language’¹⁶, perhaps even otherwise than human. This would mean following the concept of unconditional hospitality to its limit, as Derrida alludes to in *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness* and *Points*¹⁷. This question will be revisited in Chapter Three.

Otherwise than Phenomenology

Though I do not dedicate a separate analysis to it, I will, throughout this study, also be problematising the methodological and philosophical need for the use of a different vocabulary, especially as resulting from a Lévinasian and Derridean analysis of the self-other relation. Both Derrida and Lévinas could be understood as working on the margins of phenomenology, in that, in the wake of Heidegger’s and Nietzsche’s work, they are continuously placing the language of phenomenology in question.¹⁸

There has been a great deal of contention, for instance, over Lévinas’s use of religiously-laden hyperbole throughout his work, but especially in *O.B.* This has been the catalyst for much opposition to his project in general. Against the interpretation of his project as ultimately indebted to unacknowledged religious import, I contend that his use of such terms is in keeping with the phenomenological tradition he is part of and *methodological* in purpose. Terms such as ‘god’, for instance, are meant to underline the *experience* of the relationship between self and other, emphasising it in hyperbolical and perhaps even analogical fashion for a reader otherwise familiar with the description of such phenomena in other contexts. Lévinas is, then, making use of a vocabulary not at the disposal of the phenomenological tradition up to that point, a set of terms that is particularly apt for the description of the intensely affecting manner in which the other is experienced.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 298 f.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 299.

¹⁷ J. Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, trans. M. Dooley and M. Hughes (London, New York: Routledge, 2001), J. Derrida, *Of Hospitality*/Anne Dufourortantelle invites Jacques Derrida to Respond, trans. R. Bowlby (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2000).

¹⁸ For an analysis of how Heidegger, Lévinas and Derrida are working within phenomenology, but also on its margins, see Simon Glendinning *In the Name of Phenomenology* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007).

Reconciling Asymmetry and Politics

One of the guiding questions of this study is whether one can reconcile asymmetry, which, in Lévinas's work, is associated with ethics, with politics and universality, which require symmetry and reciprocity. In many ways, this is also Lévinas's guiding question, and the focus of a large body of commentary. I argue that asking the above question is asking the wrong question, because it conflates the levels of ethics and the political, which Lévinas keeps separate. The metaphysical level of ethics is one of absolute asymmetry and, even though 'corrected by the political' and serving as a corrective for politics,¹⁹ it does not take place on the same level. The level of the political is one on the phenomenological ground, or epistemological ground, and ushers in questions of justice and equality. Lévinas concedes to introducing categories like 'fraternity' into the dyad of self and other, in order to 'moderate' the absolute alterity of the other, the persecution of self by other. However, 'fraternity', for Lévinas, remains on the level of politics, and so of violence and totality.

I shall show why interpreting the so-called move from ethics to politics could not entail a leap. Lévinas's more explicit engagement with politics in *T.I.* and *O.B.*, as well as, in a punctuated fashion, throughout other works, such as 'The Ego and the Totality',²⁰ has been interpreted as entailing a leap or transition from the ethical sphere to the political. This commonly-accepted assumption is partly due to the choice in the order of treatment of the two concepts in works like *O.B.*, which always prioritise ethics. However, as shall become clear, were we to take into account what Lévinas writes about time, it would be impossible to claim that there is any such thing as a linear temporal structure to, say, the phenomenological order of how things appear. Inasmuch as most of Lévinas's work is directed against both the Husserlian concept of the ego as an entity aiming towards transparency to self and the Heideggerian project on the primacy of Dasein, time, too, as a major tenet of the phenomenological analysis, emerges significantly altered in Lévinas's treatment of it.

Even on a logical level, a 'leap', a move from one point to the other, or a 'transition' from ethics to politics is tenuous at best, and untenable at worst, if one considers his redefinition of time as a relationship of responsibility to the other, and Lévinas's treatment of the two spheres concerned. Inasmuch as transition is usually understood as 'a passing or passage from one condition, action,

¹⁹ Thus far in the argument, I am in agreement with Simon Critchley's *Ethics of Deconstruction Ethics of Deconstruction: Derrida and Lévinas* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999).

²⁰ Lévinas, 'The Ego and the Totality' in Emmanuel Lévinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 1998).

or (rarely) place, to another',²¹ the corollary is that one can move out of the sphere of ethics and into that of politics, that is, 'leave' ethics and 'enter' politics. A transition implies the division of the two realms, yet, as Lévinas presents them, they are implied one in the other; the separateness of concepts isn't at all clear. On the contrary, most of the impetus of the Lévinasian project, at least in *O.B.*, seems to be the insistence that there is no pure concept where ethics or politics are concerned, and certainly where the 'me' (as opposed to the 'I' of subjectivity) is concerned. If there is anything Lévinasian concepts stand for, taking into account both his philosophical writings and his political concerns, it's a deconstruction of the idea of 'purity'. It is the very possibility of a subject untainted, untouched by otherness, for whom such separateness is within the realm of possibility, that Lévinas writes against. The implied target is, of course, Heideggerian Dasein. Since Lévinas's Heidegger is always the Heidegger of *Being and Time*, I will restrict my analysis in Chapter One to this work, and to Lévinas's focused interest on Dasein as insufficiently relational.

Political space is here understood as 'a factual, ontic, or empirical terrain, in which politics is conceived as an activity of questioning, critique, judgement and decision.'²² Ethics is taken here in the Lévinasian sense as a calling of the self to responsibility, or as a calling of the self into question, and is understood as a movement of desire that tends towards the other, whether in exteriority or interiority.

Questioning the Question

The question opened by this enquiry is one that is impossible, as Derrida would say, one that it is impossible, at least, to approach directly, head-on, as it were. It is both the formal 'question of the question', that which calls out to 'us', in language, in being-in-the-world, as well as the philosophical question of the subject conceived here as singularity, as an effort to overcome the abstract conception of identity and attempt to think the self's exposure to something other, to its alterity. The question, then, is the question of the 'who' of the subject, and of the possibility for being-with that does not occlude the alterity of the other, and preclude an ethical relationality. What are the possibilities of an articulation of being that neither falls into a Heideggerian impasse whereby the human being must be conceived, singularly, as ecstatic openness, nor relapses into a self-assured construal of an unquestioned community, a community 'outside' of the question? What avenues are there for the analysis of what form or name subjectivity might

²¹Transition, *n.*, *The Oxford English Dictionary*, Second Edition, 1989, O.E.D. Online, Oxford University Press, 13 May 2012, <http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.sussex.ac.uk/view/Entry/204815>>.

²² Simon Critchley, *Ethics of Deconstruction*, *op. cit.*, p. 236.

take, when faced with a Lévinasian and Derridean rewriting of the concept? Finally, what is at stake, what ‘still speaks’ in a term like community?

This study will be guided by a set of questions, opened by both Lévinas’s and Derrida’s and, at points, Heidegger’s works and weaving themselves around the themes broached by all. Who is the singular and what are the possibilities for a being-with that does not collapse into being-in-common, being-together-in-commonality? What are the political import and the range of the term community,²³ now? What are the possibilities for a language that stems from a discursive relation to the other as otherwise-than-human? What meaning would an ethics opened by the above question take on? Must the Good be aligned, as in Lévinas’s work, only with the human Other? What meaning would the concept of responsibility take on, when viewed through the lens of responsibility of the other-within-the-Same? Must Lévinas’s Other necessarily be a ‘brother’²⁴ and can a snake have a face? What politics might one imagine if the third is evinced, through both Lévinas’s and Derrida’s analyses to be always already there in the eyes of the Other-within-the-Same? What if the third in the eyes of the other within the same is not human, not even animated?

²³ Derrida, *P.F.*, *op. cit.*, p. 305.

²⁴ Derrida, *P.F.*, *op. cit.*, p. 304.

Rewriting Intersubjectivity

*Singularity, n.*²⁵ : *The quality or fact of being one in number or kind; singleness, oneness.*

*Community, n.*²⁶: *A body of people or things viewed and acting collectively.*

The discussion of the importance of the ethical thought of Derrida and Lévinas must begin anew with a re-examination of intersubjectivity. One corollary of questioning the notion of intersubjectivity through the work of Lévinas and Derrida is the potential impossibility of retaining the use of the notion. For, if intersubjectivity denotes the interaction of the self with other beings/individuals/selves, either alone or part of a larger corpus (societal, etc.) what would it then mean to speak of the other as unknowable, as Lévinas does in *T.I.*? Indeed, what would remain of the notion of agency of the self, when re-examined through Lévinasian theory, which largely, with *T.I.* but increasingly so with *O.B.*, defines the self in terms of passivity and subjugation to the other? Are the descriptions to be taken as rhetorical tools, designed to emphasise the point of the radical inequality of the self-other relation and the implicit precedence of the other over the self?

The notion of the intersubjective, of an equal interaction between self and self, of two largely independent, autonomous entities choosing to engage or not with another autonomous, atomistic, indivisible self is starkly different to the Lévinasian/Derridean notion of subjectivity as impossible to define without recourse to the notion of the other. Indeed, both Lévinas and Derrida present the other as constitutive of the very notion of self, and, at points, with Lévinas's *O.B.*, as supplementing the self. The notion of agency then becomes an indirect one of acting *through* the other.

Derrida and Lévinas are not the only ones who have, from *within* phenomenology, attempted a rewriting of the concept of intersubjectivity. Still, it must be stressed, and necessarily reduced

25 Singularity, *n.*, *Oxford English Dictionary*, Second edition, 1989, Online version , 25 July 2012.

Earlier version first published in *New English Dictionary*, 1911,

<<http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.sussex.ac.uk/view/Entry/180179?redirectedFrom=singularity>>.

26 Community, *n.* *Oxford English Dictionary*, Third edition, September 2009, Online version, 25 July 2012, <<http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.sussex.ac.uk/view/Entry/37337>>.

within these pages, that in spite of the claim of various phenomenological accounts of intersubjectivity to ‘correct’ the autonomy of the classic metaphysical subject, and in spite of subjectivity undergoing, with certain thinkers like Merleau-Ponty, a retrieval of sensibility,²⁷ the term intersubjectivity remains an ontological, or what Lévinas calls a *gnoseological* relation to the *alterity* of the Other.²⁸ Finally, I understand singularity as a site, a sphere within which a more relational notion of the self might be conceived. This is in keeping with the trajectory I believe Derrida to be following, in his own reformulation of the question of the subject, after Heidegger’s designation of *Dasein* as ‘site’.²⁹

Quasi-phenomenology

Throughout this study, I shall be employing the term quasi-phenomenology to highlight the particular kind of phenomenology Lévinas and Derrida are doing. The term quasi-phenomenology is based on the understanding that Lévinas’s critical engagement with Husserl and Heidegger results in a reticence to use phenomenology as naming the kind of philosophy he is doing. As is well-known, Lévinas’s distancing from both Husserl’s and Heidegger’s existential analytic of *Dasein* is crucial to the understanding of his work. As shall be elaborated in Chapter Two, Lévinas’s entire body of work is based on a powerful critique of what he takes to be the Heideggerian understanding of the human subject as a wilful, self-sufficient, autonomous being, and the Husserlian ego perceiving of otherness as ‘another self’. The use of the term quasi-phenomenology is also an allusion to Derrida’s own deployment of ‘quasi-’ when writing of Lévinasian concepts which do not straightforwardly subscribe to the usual definition assigned to them.

The concept of community of singularities, as we shall see, is one inscribed within the quasi-transcendental logic of the Derridean system. That is, it is transcendental inasmuch as it is derived from the Kantian framework, as a condition for the possibility of a thing, yet also radically inscribed within the materiality of the world, inextricable from its contextual embeddedness. The Derridean concepts of writing as generalised *iterable* mark, as well as those of trace and *différance*, are examples of quasi-transcendental concepts.

²⁷ M. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. C. Smith (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962).

²⁸ Lévinas, *O.B.*, *op. cit.*, p. 36, 64, 75 ff.

²⁹ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and E. Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962).

The terms are analogous to conditions of possibility for knowledge or meaning, as habitually posited in transcendental philosophy, though not assimilable to transcendentalism, due to the disruptive effect of the experiences they make possible upon those very conditions of possibility.³⁰ Thus, though phenomenologically derived, quasi-transcendental concepts such as *community of singularities* evade the structure of human self-consciousness and awareness, because their nature undermines the self-assured position usually assumed by subjectivity in the phenomenological tradition. Situated at the border between the transcendental and the empirical, they open the *liminal* space for positive, reciprocal contamination of universality and particularity, infinite *a priori* forms of objective knowledge and finitude.³¹

Questioning Community

Questioning community and developing concepts which rest at the junction of singularity and 'being-with' has been a principal issue in contemporary 'Continental' philosophy for some time.³² Jean-Luc Nancy and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe,³³ as well as Maurice Blanchot,³⁴ Luce

³⁰ Rodolphe Gasché coins the term in *The Tain of the Mirror: Derrida and the Philosophy of Reflection*, 1986.

³¹ The differences from the Kantian *a priori* forms of objective knowledge, as well as the Heideggerian *immanent transcendentals* will not be elaborated here. Suffice it to say that the quasi-transcendental is assimilable to neither, but sits at the margin of the distinction.

³² I am using the category of 'Continental' with caution, since the distinction between 'Analytic' and 'Continental' philosophy is a contested one, based on vague and tenuous premises. In spite of the obvious advantages to a dialogue between the two philosophical traditions, 'Analytic' philosophy has been part of the institutional mainstream in an Anglo-American context. See Simon Glendinning, *The Idea of Continental Philosophy: A Philosophical Chronicle* (Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh, 2006), Simon Critchley, 'Introduction', in *A Companion to Continental Philosophy*, eds. S. Critchley and W. Schroeder (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), Simon Critchley, *A Very Short Introduction to Continental Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). Michael Dummett's work was also committed to undermining the 'Analytic'/'Continental' distinction. See, for instance, his interview with Fabrice Pataut, in *Philosophical Investigations*, Vol. 19, No. 1, 1996, pp. 1-33.

³³ Jean-Luc Nancy *Being Singular Plural*, trans. Robert D. Richardson and Anne E. O'Byrne, (Stanford : Stanford University Press, 2000), Jean-Luc Nancy *The Inoperative Community*, trans. Peter Connor, Lisa Garbus, Michael Holland and Simona Sawhney (Minneapolis and Oxford: University of Minnesota Press, 1991) and Jean-Luc Nancy and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe *Retreating the Political*, trans. Simon Sparks (London: Routledge, 1997).

³⁴ Maurice Blanchot, *The Unavowable Community*, trans. Pierre Joris, Barrytown, (New York: Station Hill Press, 1988).

Irigaray³⁵ and, from a different perspective, Chantal Mouffe, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri have pursued, since the publication of *Empire* in 2000,³⁶ a Marxist-Spinozist trajectory in developing novel forms of being-with. There has been a particular emphasis on the critique of the concept of democracy, culminating in their co-authored *Multitude* in 2004.³⁷ Negri's *Commonwealth*,³⁸ published in 2009, and his *Declaration*³⁹ 'manifesto' engage with new forms of democracy, representation and resistance, as highlighted by the 'Occupy' movements of 2011 and 2012.

Nomadic Singularity

As stemming from a mathematical and Spinozist trajectory,⁴⁰ the concept of singularity, as well as adjacent preoccupations with the development of new forms of being-with has also been a main concern of the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze for some time. The analysis of the singular or the in-dividual as essentially founded on a principle of difference and non-correspondence to itself is conceptually close to Derrida's *différance*. One of the essential differences, however, is that Deleuze's self-titled 'transcendental empiricism' or 'ethical naturalism', with its reiterative insistence on identity dissolution and naturalistic perpetual creation of identity as an infinite procession of *causa sui* substances, renders the task of making sense of the works' ethical or political import impossible.⁴¹ Since Deleuze's focus is on the

³⁵ Luce Irigaray *Between East and West: From Singularity to Community* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

³⁶ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2000).

³⁷ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*, (New York: Penguin Press, 2004).

³⁸ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Commonwealth*, (Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009).

³⁹ Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt, *Declaration* (Kindle edition) (Argo – Navis, 2012), retrieved from Amazon.co.uk on 20/09/2012.

⁴⁰ I am here referring to Spinoza's concept of the 'monad', one of the central Spinozist concepts for Deleuze and Guattari's elaboration of the arboreal as a form of being-with in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).

⁴¹ See, for instance, his concept of rhizome, in *A Thousand Plateaus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986, *passim*. Deleuze's preference for the creation of neologisms habitually employed in science results in the habitation of an 'otherworldly' conceptual environment, which is as exhilarating, as it is difficult to 'think' ethically and politically. Peter Hallward comes to a similar conclusion in *Out of this World: Deleuze and the Philosophy of Creation* (London and New York: Verso, 2006). Though generally sympathetic to Deleuze's project, Hallward, too, finds it difficult to imagine the political or ethical import to Deleuze's works, since, in

creative process *as process*, with the premise being that the aim of beings, as creatures (and in this, he includes the human being) is to ‘rid ourselves of ourselves’,⁴² i.e. the dissolution of identity, the end result, if one can speak of an end, looks akin to an abstract thought experiment on being as other-than-singular. Whilst this is, nevertheless, a promising starting point, the presumption that one can indeed, rid oneself of identity as well as the corollary that being, then, is becoming *as such* are premises which are, as stated above, difficult to sustain and defend.⁴³ Insofar as his work is *theophanic* in spirit⁴⁴, one could perhaps even argue that the abstract experiment of thinking singularity beyond singularity has failed. Thinking creation or becoming as such ultimately appeals to the concept of god (or, indeed, gods) as absolute ‘creator(s)’. Although certainly not developed within a theological framework, there are important senses in which Deleuze’s underlying assumption seems to be that of a ‘singular and absolute creative power’ (actual or as the condition for the possibility for the process of creation).⁴⁵

Another line of enquiry into singularity and being-with is pursued by Giorgio Agamben in *The Coming Community*. Concerned with breaching or going ‘beyond’ the universality-individuality antinomy, Agamben develops a community as a ‘being together of existences’ as linguistic belonging and develops ‘love’ and the ‘whatever’ (*qualunque*) as replacements for the concept of singularity,⁴⁶ in that they do not suggest the property of the ‘who’ or a directedness towards

spite of their orientation towards the empirical. Deleuze’s works generally involve a dismissal of the conditions of human existence, as well as the passive dissolution of identity and new forms of creation. Cf. ‘(...) What is primary is always the creating rather than the created: a writing rather than the written, an expressing rather than the expressed, a conceiving rather than the conceived.’ (Peter Hallward, *Out of This World: Deleuze and the Philosophy of Creation* (London and New York: Verso, 2006), p. 1.

⁴² Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement - Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. 66.

⁴³ Cf. ‘To reduce oneself to an abstract line, a trait, in order to find one’s zone of indiscernibility with other traits, and in this way enter the haccuity of the creator. One is then like grass: one has made the whole world into a becoming because one has suppressed in oneself everything that prevents us from slipping between things.’ (Gilles Deleuze, *A Thousand Plateaus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), pp. 29-80.

⁴⁴ ‘Whereby every individual process or thing is conceived as a manifestation or expression of God or a conceptual equivalent of God (pure creative potential, force, energy, life...).’ (Peter Hallward, *Out of This World: Deleuze and the Philosophy of Creation* (London and New York: Verso, 2006), p. 4.

⁴⁵ Peter Hallward, *Out of This World: Deleuze and the Philosophy of Creation* (London and New York: Verso, 2006), p. 4.

⁴⁶ The ‘whatever’ is, for Agamben, ‘neither a universal, nor an individual, but (...) being-such, (...) belonging itself.’ Giorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community*, trans. Michael Hardt, Minneapolis:

what might be referred to in a Lévinasian framework as the Other. Also concerned with exploring the ethico-political consequences of reconceptualising being-with are Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau. Working within the post-Marxist tradition, Mouffe and Laclau have, in their *Hegemony and Socialist strategy*,⁴⁷ developed modes of being-with within the framework of what they call ‘radical democracy’.⁴⁸ What the majority of philosophico-political projects therefore have in common is a concern with developing being-with beyond an obliteration of difference, coexistent with the ‘coagulation’ of subjectivities under the aegis of various names and reworkings of the concept of community.

Not Disjoining Lévinas and Derrida⁴⁹

The reception of Derrida’s work within philosophical circles seems to have undergone a series of compartmentalisations over the years. Aside from early debates between those committed to reading Derrida’s work as apolitical irony⁵⁰ and those who argued for an inherently political aspect to deconstructive practice, but concluded it insufficiently specified and elaborated its conclusions, thereby presenting their own work as a political ‘supplement’,⁵¹ other worrying splits have occurred in the reception of Derridean texts. There is little consensus, for instance, between those who read Derrida’s work as an extension of Lévinas’s philosophy, and therefore, unconcerned with the political, and those who read Derrida’s work as a departure from Lévinas’s work,⁵² and, therefore, politically committed.⁵³ The kernel around which the debate revolves seems to be within the interpretation of Lévinas’s work as having nothing or too little to offer to the political, and those who believe that Lévinas’s work is, indeed, inherently

University of Minnesota Press, 2007), p. 1. ‘The singularity exposed as such is whatever you want, that is, loveable’ (ibid.).

⁴⁷ Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (London : Verso, 2001).

⁴⁸ Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, op. cit., p. xv, passim.

⁴⁹ My title in this section alludes to contradicting Martin Hägglund (see n. 52).

⁵⁰ See, e.g. Richard Rorty *Contingency, Irony, Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

⁵¹ See, e.g., Simon Critchley, *Infinitely Demanding: Ethics of Commitment, Politics and Resistance* (London: Verso, 2007).

⁵² E.g., Martin Hägglund ‘The Necessity of Discrimination: Disjoining Derrida and Lévinas’, in *Diacritics*, Vol. 34, No. 1, (Spring 2004), pp. 40-71.

⁵³ E.g., Simon Critchley, *Ethics of Deconstruction: Derrida and Lévinas* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999). Critchley’s was the first book-length study to argue for the ethical turn of deconstruction and point out the ethico-political consequences of such a reading. However, he concludes, throughout his work, that Derrida does not take deconstruction far enough in this direction, thereby posing his own work as a political supplement. I reserve the specifics of this argument for a later point.

political in manner which renders it impossible for Derrida to follow him.⁵⁴ Against both these views, I will be arguing that Lévinas's work, and, in particular, *O.B.*, can be read as not merely engaging with the political throughout, but as revising the dyadic conceptualisation of ethics and politics as essentially separate spheres. A corollary of this will be that, since Derrida's work is underlined by Lévinasian resonances, as well as explicit commitments to his rewriting of the relationship between ethics and politics, one could safely read Derrida as writing 'in the spirit' of Lévinas, without lapsing into political quietude, or, indeed, more worryingly, subscribing to any of Lévinas's purported political affiliations. We will now move onto an examination of the question of singularity through Heidegger's *Dasein*. As previously stated, *Being and Time* will be the focus of this enquiry, and the reading limited to Derrida's and Lévinas's focusing on the insufficiently relational character of *Dasein*, too deaf and blind to the other to satisfy the stringency of the responsibility to otherness that both the Derridean and the Lévinasian projects demand.

II. Heidegger and the Question

Introduction – Whence Singularity?

*'Is the ego the only answer to the question 'Who?' And if so, what would be the consequences of this?'*⁵⁵

The concept of the singular, in the contemporary Continental tradition, is grounded in the Heideggerian existential analytic, whereby *Dasein* is radically alone in the experience of death.⁵⁶ It is from the place of death as breaching relationality that singularity draws its feature of irreplaceability. And it is from this place that the singular self is called into question, called to

⁵⁴ See, for instance, reading of Lévinas's work as being underlined by a political Messianism which is inherently religious and committed to Zionist politics (Simon Critchley, 'Five Problems in Lévinas's View of Politics and the Sketch of a Solution to Them', in *Political Theory*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (Apr., 2004), pp. 172-185.

⁵⁵ J. Derrida, *Points*, 1992, p. 262.

⁵⁶ I will be following the Heideggerian trajectory in the analysis of the concept of the singular, as opposed to its Deleuzian counterpart, stemming from the Leibnizian notion of the *monad*. There, is course, also a mathematical concept, with which we shall not be concerned.

responsibility. ‘Only a mortal’, writes Derrida, in *The Gift of Death*, ‘can be responsible’.⁵⁷ Heidegger’s singularity, for Derrida, is grounded in

(...) an irreplaceability, [in] that which remains nonsubstitutable in the structure of Dasein. This amounts to an irreducible singularity or *solitude* in *Mitsein* (which is also a condition of *Mitsein*), but it is not that of the individual [emphasis added]. This last concept always risks pointing toward both the ego and the organic or atomic indivisibility. The *Da* of *Dasein* singularises itself without being reducible to any of the categories of human subjectivity (self, reasonable being, consciousness, person), precisely because it is presupposed by all of these.⁵⁸

Dasein, for Heidegger, is a relational being: in its everyday existence, Dasein ‘is for others before it is in and for itself’.⁵⁹ *Dasein*, as is well known, is defined as *Mitsein* (Being-With), in a displacement of the interpretation of the subject as *res cogitans*, and of the subject-object dichotomy.⁶⁰ In the 1924 lecture *Der Begriff der Zeit* Heidegger writes:

Dasein is an entity which is characterised by being-in-the-world. Human life is not some subject that has to perform some trick in order to enter the world...As this being-in-the-world Dasein is, together with this, being-with-one-another (*Mit-einander-sein*) being with others: ‘having the same world there (*da*) with others, being with one another in the manner of Being-for-one-another (*Für-einander-sein*).’⁶¹

However, and without undermining Being-for-Others, it is in the experience of anxiety, the basic attunement or *Grundstimmung* of anxiety, where entities withdraw, that *Dasein* becomes

⁵⁷ J. Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, trans. David Wills (London and Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 41.

⁵⁸ J. Derrida, *Points*, 1992, p. 271.

⁵⁹ M. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 1962.

⁶⁰ A detailed analysis of the relationship between *Dasein* and *Mitsein* is outside the scope of this study. For both Lévinas and Derrida *Dasein* is insufficiently relational, in spite of the development of *Mitsein* in *Being and Time*. Derrida’s enquiry into otherness is always done through the exigency of a Lévinasian lens, in its absolute responsibility to respond to the call of the other. Thus, I will be restricting my treatment of the material to Derrida’s and Lévinas’s own premise and proceed with their treatments of alterity. For an in-depth study of being-with-others in Heidegger’s work, in which the relationship between *Mitsein* and *Dasein* is investigated closely, in relation to Derrida’s work, please see Simon Glendinning *On Being With Others: Heidegger-Derrida-Wittgenstein* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998).

⁶¹ Martin Heidegger, *Der Begriff Der Zeit*, Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1989, p. 12; *The Concept of Time*, trans. William McNeill (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), pp. 7-8.

disclosed as a *solus ipse*, a self alone.⁶² *Dasein* is then further individualised in Being-Towards-Death, as Derrida writes in the above quote, a death which leaves *Dasein* open and resolute (*entschlossen*) in the face of it.⁶³

Derrida and others⁶⁴ have critiqued *Dasein*'s authentic selfhood as the last heir to metaphysical subjectivity, one that repeats the auto-affection of the Cartesian self-constituting ego, in spite of the Heideggerian efforts to surpass this.⁶⁵ Here, the being of the human is defined as openness to the claims or the call of Being (*Der Anspruch des Seiens*). The call is one that does not originate within *Dasein*, but relates the human to the event of an irreducible alterity, an exteriority to the self.⁶⁶ The understanding of the human, on this later Heideggerian account, is no longer focused on *Dasein* as subjective master of entities, but as the 'shepherd of Being', and is ecstatically open to the donation of the truth of Being,⁶⁷ amounting to a possibly more 'relational' interpretation of *Dasein* than one offered by a reading of *Being and Time*. I will focus here, however, on the reading of Heidegger salient from a Lévinasian and Derridean critique, for whom the resoluteness of *Dasein* is still too 'active' for an absolutely passive subject, subjected and hostage to the other.⁶⁸

With beginning to think a *community of singularities*, and in critically engaging with Heideggerian singularity, what Derrida is proposing is not a sweeping away of the previous tradition of subjectivity, an epochal shift tantamount to what the Heideggerian project attempts. Indeed, Derrida is perhaps a philosopher identifiable with not merely scepticism against what one might refer to as 'revolutionary moves'⁶⁹ in philosophy, but a critical stance towards any

⁶² M. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 1962, p. 232 [pp. 187-188].

⁶³ M. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 1962, p. 314 [p. 270].

⁶⁴ See Jean-Luc Marion, 'The Final Appeal of the Subject' and Dominique Janicaud, 'The Question of Subjectivity in Heidegger's Being and Time', in S. Critchley, *Deconstructive Subjectivities*, 1995.

⁶⁵ To do justice in a response to this critique of subjectivity in Heidegger, one would have to consider his later account of the essence of the human (*der Mensch*), in such texts as 'Letter on Humanism', where the human is the entity that exists ecstatically in nearness to the truth of Being (M. Heidegger, 'Letter on Humanism', in M. Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, 1978). This argument is outside the bounds of development within these pages. What is essential to note is that the relationality of *Dasein* has been heavily placed into question.

⁶⁶ Heidegger, M. *Being and Time*, 1962, pp. 346-347.

⁶⁷ Heidegger, M. 'Letter on Humanism', in M. Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, p. 221.

⁶⁸ Cf. Lévinas, E. *Totality and Infinity*, *op. cit.*, passim. A further necessity for focusing on Heidegger's *Being and Time* arises out of the fact that Lévinas's Heidegger is ultimately the author of *Being and Time*.

⁶⁹ Understood as attempts to 'get behind' the philosophical context one is working within, to an 'uncorrupted' beginning, such as what Derrida takes Heidegger to be attempting with *B.T.* For an analysis

claim to stand outside or before one's contextual embedding. Context, he clarifies, 'is the entire "real history of the world" in which (the) value of objectivity and that of truth (etc.) have taken on meaning and imposed themselves. That does not in the slightest discredit them. In the name of what, which other 'truth', moreover, would it?'⁷⁰ Derrida's allusion here is to what I shall later refer to as figures of the 'unconditional without sovereignty'.⁷¹ That is, in spite of the understanding of them as lacking an authority conferred on them from exteriority, concepts like truth, objectivity and, later, as we shall see in Chapter Three, in the analysis of *P.F.* and *B.S.*, friendship, democracy, fraternity, and the difference between animal and human cannot be dismissed. Dismissing them and attempting to rewrite their history would assume yet another sovereign point outside of them, conferring weight upon them.

In that sense, the trajectory of the construction of subjectivity is not one that could have been avoided, just as a deconstruction of it is not one that could be brought to it from externality. Derrida makes this clear in his earliest writing, in *Of Grammatology*, which renders later accusations of 'messianism'⁷² and a reading of deconstruction as a proposed 'epochal shift' simply nonsensical. 'One must accentuate', writes Derrida, 'the naïveté of a breakthrough which cannot attempt to step outside metaphysics, which cannot criticize metaphysics radically

of these moments within phenomenology, for instance, understood as interruptions, attempts at 'new beginnings', or 'launches and re-launches', see Simon Glendinning, *In the Name of Phenomenology* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 1.

⁷⁰ Derrida, J. *Limited Inc.* trans. Samuel Weber and Jeffrey Mehlman (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1972) p. 136.

⁷¹ Derrida, *Rogues*, *op. cit.*

⁷² As will become clear in the following chapter, the Messianicity or Messianism developed by both Lévinas and Derrida are concepts retaining the formal structure of Messianicity, whilst stripping the concept of its 'loaded' religious connotations. Derrida introduces the concept of 'Messianism without Messiah' in *Acts of Religion* (Jacques Derrida, *Acts of Religion*, ed., Gil Anidjar (London: Routledge, 2002), *passim*. Lévinas had developed the concept throughout his writings, with a clearer emphasis on Messianicity in *O.B.* For a study focused on Lévinas's concept of the Messianic, see Terence Holden, *Lévinas, Messianism and Parody* (London: Continuum, 2011). On the relation between Lévinas's eschatology and his concept of the Messianic, see Robert Bernasconi, 'Different Styles of Eschatology: Derrida's Take on Lévinas's Political Messianism', in *Research in Phenomenology*, Vol. 28, 1998, No. 1, pp. 3-19 (17). On eschatology in Lévinas, see Graham Ward, 'On Time and Salvation: The Eschatology of Emmanuel Lévinas', in *Facing the Other. The Ethics of Emmanuel Lévinas*, ed. Seán Hand (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1996).

without still utilizing it in a certain way.⁷³ The point we are at today, that is, is characterised by a mark of necessity, which also bears the mark of interruption.

Deconstruction, *Destruktion*, *Abbau*

The roots of deconstruction as a movement and a name are otherwise well documented as part of the trajectory established by the Heideggerian concepts of *Destruktion* and *Abbau*,⁷⁴ neither of which is to be understood as a simple, negative movement. Just as *Destruktion* is not destruction (destroying), but a ‘dismantling of structural layers’, so *Abbau* is not demolition, but ‘a taking apart which seeks the constitution of a thing.’⁷⁵ Deconstruction’s purpose is not to take concepts which have become rigid and invest them, once more, with life and meaning; it does not serve the purpose of ‘pointing back’ to some mysterious origin and effect a ‘correction’ of the usage of a word. What Derrida is suggesting is not the substitution of subjectivity with singularity, and further, with community, or ‘society’.⁷⁶ A deconstructive approach to subjectivity involves tracing the history of the concept’s inscription, exposing the ontological condition of what has been, and still is, referred to as ‘the self’. This is then followed by a consideration of what ‘remains’ when these layers have been exposed. The question of ‘who’ is thrown into the world, to speak with Heidegger, or ‘who (is) thrown’⁷⁷, in a move that brackets the verb and destabilises the genealogical structure that links grammar to the metaphysics of the subject, a link Nietzsche warns against. The question then becomes how one distances oneself from the ‘contract’ between the grammar of a subject or substantive and the ontology of substance or subject.⁷⁸ This gesture, informed by the Lévinasian notion of the Other and self as *aporetic*, leaves open the primacy and self-assured constitution of that which shows itself, that which philosophy (at least in its onto-phenomenological guise) seeks to ‘expose’. This ‘who’ is, for Derrida, marked by absence, by what he elsewhere conceives of as the trace, or the specular feature of the self.⁷⁹

⁷³ J. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 1976, p. 19. Although the quote pertains to a section on Nietzsche’s philosophy in *Of Grammatology*, it stands, in general, as support for Derrida’s philosophical stance and is repeated in various places, not least in interviews (see *Points*, 1992).

⁷⁴ J. Derrida, 1985, p. 76.

⁷⁵ S. Glendinning, *Chapter 2: Language*, in J. Reynolds & J. Roffe, *Understanding Derrida*, 2004, p. 76.

⁷⁶ This statement will be qualified and supported in due time. What is being outlined here is the ontological trajectory of singularity.

⁷⁷ Derrida, J. *Points*, 1992, p. 270.

⁷⁸ Derrida, J. *Points*, 1992, p. 262.

⁷⁹ See Derrida, J. *Aporias*, 1993.

Who Comes After the Subject?

Though the scope of the analysis extends beyond the pages of this study, it must briefly be asked, given the above critique levelled by Derrida at the history of the metaphysical construction of subjectivity: how legitimate is the claim, Heidegger's claim, in its originary formulation, that the metaphysics of the subject, the whole of Western metaphysics, is inscribed within a 'forgetfulness of Being'.⁸⁰ That is, a forgetfulness of the formulation of the question, the only viable question: 'Who comes after the subject?'? Derrida himself asks this in *Points*, and concludes that even in the most marked transcendental idealism, which he identifies as that of Husserl, even 'where the origin of the world is described, after the phenomenological reduction, as originary consciousness in the form of the ego, even in a phenomenology that determines the Being of beings as an object in general for a subject in general, even in this great philosophy of the transcendental subject, the interminable genetic (so-called passive) analyses of the ego, of time and the alter ego lead back to a pre-egological and pre-subjectivist zone. There is, therefore, at the heart of what passes for (...) transcendental idealism, a horizon of questioning that is no longer dictated by the egological form of subjectivity and intersubjectivity.'⁸¹ One way of posing the question whilst maintaining its openness would be to raise the possibility, with Lévinas, of there being something otherwise than that which has been 'forgotten': the Other, who never comes *after* the subject, but redefines the concept. We will turn to this in Chapter Two. We shall now outline how the Heideggerian question of the question (the question of Being) skews formal logic and temporality,⁸² having passed through a reformulation of subjectivity in the work of Lévinas and Derrida.

Heidegger's Question

'If the question what? in its adherence to Being, is at the origin of all thinking, [...] all research and all philosophy go back to ontology. But the question of the Question is more radical. Why does research take the form of a question? How is it that the what? already plunged in being so as to open it up the more, becomes a demand [demande] and prayer [prière], a particular language inserting into the communication of the given [donné] a call for help, for aid, addressed to the Other [autrui]?'⁸³

⁸⁰ Heidegger, *B.T.*, *op. cit.*, p. 388 [p. 339] *passim*.

⁸¹ Derrida, *J. Points*, 1992, p. 263.

⁸² I reserve a specification of how, precisely, this skewing occurs for the following chapter.

⁸³ Lévinas, *O.B.*, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

The present chapter of this study will take as its point of departure the Heideggerian investigation into the meaning of Being through an analysis of the question of Being and the call, and Derrida's notion of *différance* as determinative of the altered equation of the law of identity. I shall, however, be focusing on the Lévinasian trace behind Derrida's concept of *différance*, drawing an arc which takes as its point of departure Heidegger's question of Being, which undergoes a radical transformation via Lévinas and concludes with Derrida's *différance*. I shall be arguing that an investigation into Heidegger's concepts of the question and the call, which are the target of Derrida's critique of Heidegger, opens the way into the understanding of subjectivity as the Lévinasian other-within-the-same. This could also be read as providing the chiasmus for Derrida's development of *différance* and singularity as based on the non-identity of the self with itself.

The following sections of this study inscribe singularity within a relational logic and question the possibility of a bond between singularities that would resemble anything like a minimal community, a term that paradoxically, Derrida both proposes and rejects, a notion adored by liberal political theory, Communitarianism as well as theories of consensus, and abhorred by those who would like to see Derrida's thought as committed to the impossibility of a *being-with* and therefore inconsequential in the political sphere. In the following section, I will address how Derridean and Lévinasian logic skews the average understanding of identity or singularity as correspondence with itself.

The Question of $A=A$. Self-Identity

The concept of singularity, as read through a Heideggerian-Lévinasian-Derridean lens, undergoes a series of transformations, leading to the understanding of it as counter-intuitive to the definition of it as dictated by classical logic. Insofar as the law of singularity, as is well-known in mathematics or classical logic, subscribes to the classical formula $A=A$, or 'any thing is itself', a Lévinasian-Derridean concept of the singular places the very name of it under a question mark. In philosophy, discussions of the law of self-identity and its repercussions for the definition of that which is put in question, the self, or subjectivity, have always permeated its history and punctuated its course. In what follows, I shall take as my starting point John Russon's essay, 'The Self as Resolution'⁸⁴ and show why his reading of authenticity in Heidegger is marked by less ambiguity than it should be.

⁸⁴ Russon, J. 'The Self as Resolution', in *Research in Phenomenology*, 38, (2008), pp. 90-110.

In 'The Self as Resolution', John Russon provides a useful starting point for the discussion of identity revealed as non-correspondence with itself.⁸⁵ Russon takes as his point of departure the Fichtean and Kantian definitions of self-identity as positing a correspondence of 'I' with 'I' behind every assertion of the truth or property of anything at all. That is, my ability to recognize the continuity of the two As in the self-identity equation presupposes the self's ability to recognize his or her own experience.⁸⁶ Russon's discussion of authenticity posits the Heideggerian investigation into the question of Being as the transformative locus for the classical law of identity.

Russon's posing of the question of identity as A=A by way of the understanding of it as 'the answering of the question posed by the first A' provides a useful relation to the Lévinasian concept of the Other-in-the-same, developed in Chapter Two. Russon focuses on Derrida's concept of *différance*. A definition of *différance* is particularly difficult to provide, due to its employment in a variety of Derridean texts, with different focuses. However, it is generally understood to signify a relation of non-identity to itself, insofar as its name alludes to both difference and deferral and famously provides the kernel, along with iterability, of Derrida's deconstruction of the concept of writing in the Western metaphysical tradition (found in *Speech and Phenomena* and developed in *Of Grammatology*). It encompasses, like all Derridean quasi-transcendental concepts, both a 'condition for the possibility of' and its concrete instantiation, and sits at the very juncture of temporality, turned towards a future-to-come-never-to-be-instantiated and a past that was never present.⁸⁷

Insofar as the concept is originally introduced in *Speech and Phenomena*⁸⁸ through an engagement with Husserl's time-consciousness, it signifies the rupture within the temporal axis of perpetual 'now' moments, which resist being revealed to consciousness. Though later surfacing in other contexts, it is the phenomenon of writing, in this early text, which captures the dual structure of *différance* as deferral and differing – the internal schism at the heart of writing, due to its structure as both absence (of both a putative author and meaning of text) and the constant deferral of meaning, never instantiated or conveyed in any one moment. A text's meaning emerges in the suspended non-locus which marks the distance between 'sender' and 'recipient'.

⁸⁵ Russon, 'The Self as Resolution', *op. cit.*, p. 92.

⁸⁶ Russon, 'The Self as Resolution', *op. cit.*, p. 92.

⁸⁷ Derridean conditions 'for the possibility of' are always also conditions for the *impossibility* of a thing. However, I am here focusing on the juncture between the conditions *for* the possibility of a thing and its instantiation.

⁸⁸ Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena, And Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs*, trans. David B. Allison, (Evanston : Northwestern University Press, 1973).

Spacing

Put differently, and from an ethical point of view that is closer to a Lévinasian vocabulary, meaning arises within the space between self and other. The internal *a* of *différance* denotes both alterity at the heart of subjectivity ('difference') - the very cause of the above-mentioned juncture within time - and the allusion to temporal deferral, the dislocation of the time-axis by the alterity which determines the very definition of subjectivity. In what might be referred to as a 'classical' Derridean 'double bind' reminiscent of the Lévinasian quasi-transcendentality, to which we shall return below, the difference or alterity at the heart of subjectivity destabilises temporality such that it both precedes and gives rise to the subjectivity it determines. This constitutes both an *a priori* and an *a posteriori*, though, crucially, never *a present*, in a transformative process which radically alters the very terms of the equation.

In Russon's terms, 'the first and second As' of the law of identity differ roughly as question and answer⁸⁹. However, from a Lévinasian view-point, one might say that the call of the Other and the response both rewrite the self as 'shouldering the weight of the Other'⁹⁰. The Other is, in other words, the 'completion' of the 'equation' of self with self. If the rending within the self is signified by the '=' sign, which is no longer and perhaps never was, in a past never present, the '=' of logic and mathematics, the question and answer both posit a self modified by the distorted temporal structure of the other within the same.

Although referenced in a footnote with specific emphasis on the 'hermeneutical dimensions of reading',⁹¹ Russon's approach to the productive space between subjectivity and the text is strikingly Gadamerian in tone. In the latter section of his essay especially, he places the emphasis precisely on the potentiality epitomised by the 'learning' process, and the creative possibilities of the encounter between subjectivity and text. Whether with reference to text, the work of art, or history, Gadamer generally refers to this creative *spacing* as the *median point of play*.⁹² The creative spacing mentioned above occurs in a *fusion of horizons* (*Horizontverschmelzung*) that is close, in its conceptualisation, to the Heideggerian and the Husserlian 'world'. Though commentators have generally argued that the *fusion of horizons*

⁸⁹ Russon, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

⁹⁰ Cf. 'Impassively undergoing the weight of the Other' (Lévinas, *O.B.*, *op. cit.*, p. 118).

⁹¹ Russon, 'The Self as Resolution', *op. cit.*

⁹² I am here employing *spacing* in the Derridean sense of *espacement*, to signal the closeness between the two concepts, both of which draw their function from an engagement with Husserl. Cf. Derrida *Speech and Phenomena*, *op. cit.*, p. 69 and passim and Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (London and New York: Continuum, 2004).

referred to by Gadamer is too ‘conciliatory’ a horizon to ever come close to either a Heideggerian ‘world’ or a Derridean *différance*, I believe it could convincingly be argued that the engagement between text and subjectivity would be better understood as an encounter between the Lévinasian absolute Otherness and ‘the same’. Moreover, insofar as the *fusion of horizons* is never intended to be an instantiation, Gadamer’s notion sits close to a Derridean *future-to-come*, which the notion of *différance* always rends open.

Russon’s use of learning in his understanding of Heideggerian authenticity may not be the most helpful term to understand Heideggerian authenticity *as* anticipatory resoluteness, both because it is too specific⁹³ and because it implies, through its etymology, the possibility of the sedimentation of the knowledge or transformative effect of the encounter with the text or with the Other, with the Other as text and the text as other. In spite of its status as a transitive verb, to learn also implies the acquisition or directedness towards that which is to be learned.⁹⁴ That is, from a Lévinasian view-point, learning would be still be ‘trapped’ within the Husserlian horizon of *directedness* towards the object of understanding and *intentionality*, it would belong to a self-sure ego, not open enough to the radical possibilities of the transformative encounter with the Other. In spite of Russon’s emphasis that the meanings ‘which present themselves to me’ are not products of my ‘will’,⁹⁵ but rather are made possible by the self understood as anticipatory resoluteness, the designation of the self proper as anticipatory resoluteness and *différance* is too solid a ground, too specific and definitive a determination for both Derrida’s notion of *différance* and Heidegger’s resoluteness.

Briefly put, the call of conscience is important for Derrida’s reading of Heidegger since it is that which facilitates the modification from inauthenticity to authenticity, it is the ‘ontological condition for the possibility of’ that modification.⁹⁶ Since Derrida is always reading Heidegger with an eye (or ear) to Lévinas, this could be restated in the following manner: the other is the ontological condition for the possibility of the subject’s move out of the stifling claustrophobia of its own being. This call of conscience calls unambiguously⁹⁷ which is normally a distinguishing feature of conscience from the idle chatter of *das Man*. This feature of the call of conscience, its unambiguous calling, has a disquieting effect, and, as we shall see, is relevant for Derrida’s reading.

⁹³ Cf. ‘Learning, living authentically, means putting oneself at risk with no guarantee of where one will end up.’ (Russon, ‘The Self as Resolution’, *op. cit.*, p. 104).

⁹⁴ See learning as the acquisition of knowledge, Learn, v., Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd Edition, online version, <http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.sussex.ac.uk/view/Entry/106716>, accessed 6 June 2012.

⁹⁵ Russon, ‘The Self as Resolution’, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

⁹⁶ Heidegger *B.T.*, *op. cit.*, p. 267.

⁹⁷ Heidegger, *B.T.*, *op. cit.*, p. 271.

Ambiguity

The degree to which ambiguity, or undecidability is narrowed is one step too far in the direction of the designation of the self as ‘proper’ to itself.⁹⁸ Rendered with reference to the $A=A$ equation, one might say that although the second A is indeed kept open, with regards to the undecidability of the possibilities which present themselves to the ‘I’, the first A is too specific. The question of Being posed, in a Heideggerian sense, *to* Dasein, *by* Dasein, via otherness does not allow sufficient ambiguity or sufficient spacing for the alterity of the other to radically modify subjectivity to the point of the above equation of A with A being rendered ‘nonsensical’. Indeed, insofar as the second A as answer is radically, absolutely other, it may be more useful to conceptualise an identity equation such as the above through the Lévinasian concept of other-within-the-same. The notion of otherness-within-sameness is a core concept in the following chapter and shall be developed in due time. For our purposes, what is crucial to retain is the formal structure of otherness within the same rendering open of subjectivity from within, not from exteriority. In other words, the relation between self and other allows for too much ‘spacing’, both in Derridean and Heideggerian terms, and insufficient spacing.

Russon’s suggestion seems to be that the self as anticipatory resoluteness is something akin to the condition for the possibility of encountering the other, with all the transformative possibilities this implies. Even though the ‘conditions of possibility of’ are surely not to be understood in a Kantian sense, but in a Heideggerian sense of ‘lived’ and ‘factual’, the closing off of ambiguity or possibilities that Russon sees the second A (I as answer) as providing is in a sense too resolute, where resolution is understood as a ‘*resolving* of my possibilities into a specific actuality.’⁹⁹ Indeed, Russon is aware of the risk he is running in deciding to employ the concept of *potentiality* as opposed to *possibility*, something he recognises as contrary to Heidegger’s intentions in *B.T.*¹⁰⁰

A Minimal Community of the Question

One way to formulate the relation between the demands of the political, tending towards universality and the demands of ethics, tending towards the non-violent relation towards absolute difference, is Derrida’s concept of the *community of the question*. Since its introduction

⁹⁸ See, for instance, p. 101 and, particularly, p. 105. The employment of the phrase ‘terrain of authenticity as *différance*’ (p. 106) would sound problematical to Derridean ears, for instance.

⁹⁹ Russon, ‘The Self as Resolution’, p. 98, emphasis in original text.

¹⁰⁰ Russon, ‘The Self as Resolution’, p. 107, n. 30.

in Derrida's early essays, 'Violence and Metaphysics' and 'The Ends of Man', the concept has received a considerable amount of attention. However, most readings focus on the understanding of the notion as a community of writing. Indeed, Derrida's engagement with the notion of community is tentative. In spite of his careful approach to the notion, however, the way in which the community of the question punctuates his work, without committing to the development of the notion beyond the opening of the question, is crucial to the understanding of Derrida's orientation with respect to being-with as a *minimal community*.¹⁰¹

What Derrida 'hears' in the notion of minimal community is an arche-calling, a being-with-the-other marked by the Lévinasian call to responsibility that the Other places upon me and the answer to the Other before intentionality, before the 'assembling' into any actual form of being-with. This preliminary being-together is the quasi-transcendental condition for the possibility of community, a 'preliminary consent'¹⁰² without which one would not hear the Other. Derrida also refers to this minimal community as 'minimal friendship',¹⁰³ 'incommensurable friendship and friendship of the incommensurable',¹⁰⁴ and finally, in an allusion to Blanchot, 'the unavowable of the "unavowable community"'¹⁰⁵. The minimal community evoked within 'Violence and Metaphysics'¹⁰⁶ (henceforth, 'V.M.') is otherwise developed within Derrida's later work under a different set of terms, among which are cosmopolitanism, forgiveness and hospitality.¹⁰⁷ Always broached with Lévinas in the background, community, for Derrida, is 'community' as responsibility for the Other and responsivity to the call of the Other, and comes before rights and freedom.

Rights, Freedom, Autonomy

My use of notions of right, freedom and autonomy is based on the general understanding of them as developed by classical liberal political theory. I shall not develop the distinction between the different strands in the understanding of these concepts. My motivation for the

¹⁰¹ The notion of minimal community will be developed in Chapter Three, in relation to Derrida's *Politics of Friendship*, *op. cit.*

¹⁰² *P.F.*, p. 236.

¹⁰³ This concept will be developed in Chapter three. (Jacques Derrida, *P.F.*, *op. cit.*, p. 236).

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *P.F.*, *op. cit.*, p. 236.

¹⁰⁶ Jacques Derrida, 'Violence and Metaphysics', in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 312.

¹⁰⁷ Jacques Derrida *Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, [London: Routledge, 2001 (1994)].

employment of these definitions and not elaborating the distinctions surfacing in recent years, as well as along the trajectory of classical liberal thought, is grounded in the fact that both Lévinas and Derrida work with a very loose understanding of rights, law, freedom and autonomy as generally associated with the political. Derrida's employment of the terms seems to operate on the assumption that the reader is familiar with the realm that the terms belong to, generally drawn along the Lévinasian distinction between totality and infinity, war and peace, politics and ethics. Lévinas habitually introduces the distinction through the enumeration of a set of terms which are understood as belonging to the same sphere, such as, for instance, totality, war, society, law, institutions, politics, the third and, on the other side, ethics, infinity, peace, face, Other, proximity, etc.

Chapter Two will include a close analysis of Lévinas's distinction and what emerges as a more complex understanding of the two 'realms' with *O.B.*, in which the relation between the two 'spheres' of terms is marked by interruption. As I shall argue, it is not merely that the two sets of terms can be understood and thus kept separate, but that, throughout his works, Lévinas focuses on various 'sides' of the same mutually-interruptive relation between ethics and politics. If, in *T.I.*, war and totality were evinced as always already residing at the heart of peace, threatening its stability, in *O.B.* the focus is shifted onto peace at the heart of war, ethics at the heart of politics. We shall now return to Derrida's notion of the minimal community, understood, for now, as a community of readers.

The community of readers and the philosophical community as the reception of his texts and beyond, referred by Derrida in 'V.M.' is one which also resurfaces in various places throughout his works. Derrida's works, in general, are marked by a hyper-awareness of the reception of his work, built, again, on the Lévinasian response to the call of the Other as text. The community of Derrida's reception and his philosophical heritage, the 'community of those without community', 'those readers to which', he writes, 'I am bound without ever being their equal' are readers who pertain to a certain Nietzschean community. On Derrida's terms, this is a community of the affirmation (the *yes*) before speech, of the counter-signature, the event and the interruption. Much of what Derrida considers to be his reception is comprised of a 'group' of people who belong, whilst at the same time do not belong, to a 'quasi-community of ungrateful reading',¹⁰⁸ ungratefulness which Derrida takes, in a Lévinasian vein, to be a constitutive element of any being-with whatsoever. The community of ungrateful readers signals its reception by 'going off elsewhere, reading and writing altogether differently.'¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ Derrida, *Points*, p. 351.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

One surprisingly definitive manner of explaining his trajectory as being part of a community of readers which includes Bataille, Blanchot and Nancy, is found in the following statement:

There is still perhaps *some brotherhood* in Bataille, Blanchot and Nancy, and I wonder, in the innermost recesses of my admiring friendship, if it does not deserve a little loosening up, and if it should still guide the thinking of a community, be it a community without community or a brotherhood without brotherhood.¹¹⁰

The logic of 'x without x' places the being-with of singularities on a non-ground, a lack of commonality, or a commonality in the absence of one, recalling Heidegger's *Ab-grund* as chiasmic or abyssal.¹¹¹ This is, it seems, the Heideggerian line of enquiry into being-with pursued by both Jean-Luc Nancy in *The Inoperative Community*,¹¹² as well as throughout his works, and Maurice Blanchot in *The Unavowable Community*.¹¹³ If Blanchot seems to posit death as the commonly-accepted ground of being-with, set up as the interruptive element within the ontological register, Nancy, also, seems committed to establishing a form of sociality as grounded in the 'x without x' logic. Nancy's and Blanchot's commitment to developing the notion of community beyond the unfolding and stripping off of its genealogical roots is the principal reason for their difference from Derrida, and his Lévinasian trajectory. Like Lévinas, Derrida inherits an ethical and methodological framework of 'suspicion'¹¹⁴ when approaching any concept, and, in particular, concepts which involve the coagulation or being-with of any elements or singularities whatsoever.

Addressing the Other as Minimal Community

The main disjunction seems rooted in the difference between a Lévinasian and Heideggerian approach to language as being-with, where Lévinas refuses any commonality, inscribed even within the minimal milieu of language, preferring to develop language as speech and the always already of the response to the Other.¹¹⁵ The question of community and the 'community of the

¹¹⁰ *P.F.*, p. 48, n. 15, emphasis added.

¹¹¹ Heidegger, *B.T.*, *op. cit.*

¹¹² Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, *op. cit.*

¹¹³ Blanchot, *The Unavowable Community*, *op. cit.*

¹¹⁴ See Robert Bernasconi, 'The Ethics of Suspicion', in *Research in Phenomenology*, Volume 20, Number 1, 1990, pp. 3-18(16).

¹¹⁵ Of course, neither Heidegger, nor Lévinas subscribe to what may be referred to as the common view of language. Nevertheless, for our purposes, what is crucial to note is that Heidegger still broadly conceives of language as being-with-one-another, and the locus for the disclosure of being and that which 'speaks' (Martin Heidegger, *B.T.*, §34), whereas Lévinas would recoil from any understanding of it as establishing

question’¹¹⁶ are found within the first pages of Derrida’s engagement with the thought of Emmanuel Lévinas, in ‘Violence and Metaphysics’.¹¹⁷ For Derrida, as for Lévinas, the question and language never appear as such. The question is never disclosed, but ‘(...) is always enclosed; it never appears immediately as such, but only through the hermetism of a proposition in which the answer has already begun to determine the question.’¹¹⁸

The question opened towards the other as reader, as part of the philosophical community and reception in general that Derrida’s is addressing, seems to constitute, in a formulation reminiscent of Lévinas’s own conceptualisation of speech as being called into question by the Other, the quasi-transcendental condition for the possibility of any question. This is a question that an answer has always already been provided to, in that every questioning is already a response to the call of the Other.¹¹⁹ Community is, in Derrida’s hands, ‘a community of the question about the very possibility of the question’¹²⁰, possibility which must be kept open, and ‘maintained *as a question*.’¹²¹

‘The question, then, is the third.’¹²²

The phenomenon of the question is one that Derrida pursues in his various encounters with Heidegger’s texts, often explored in relation to the call of conscience. This is a relation which Derrida takes Heidegger to be committed to, in an unacknowledged manner, throughout the existential analytic.¹²³ Referring to Heidegger’s determination of Dasein as the being which

a ground, be that even a chiasmic one. There is no language as such for Lévinas, but, rather, it exists, if it exists at all, only as a calling into question of my being by the Other (Emmanuel Lévinas, *T.I.*, p. 146). The relation to the Other, whether conceived in exteriority or interiority is not marked, as we shall see in Chapter Two, by any horizon of intelligibility.

¹¹⁶ Jacques Derrida, ‘Violence and Metaphysics’, in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 98.

¹¹⁷ Derrida, ‘Violence and Metaphysics’, in *Writing and Difference*, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

¹¹⁸ Derrida, ‘Violence and Metaphysics’, in *Writing and Difference*, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

¹¹⁹ Cf. ‘The question has already begun’, Jacques Derrida, ‘V.M.’, p. 98 ff.

¹²⁰ Jacques Derrida, ‘Violence and Metaphysics’, in *Writing and Difference*, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, emphasis mine.

¹²² Jacques Derrida, *Adieu*, p. 31.

¹²³ The extent to which Derrida is correct in making the above claim, or whether subsequent commentators are then right in taking Derrida’s link for granted, will not be the focus here. Space constraints also mean that the phenomena of the call of conscience and the question will not be explored in detail, but will, instead, take the form of an exegetical avenue into the further development of the two phenomena.

'hears' the question of Being, Derrida writes that who we are '[is] first and foremost determined from the opening to the *question of Being*.'¹²⁴ The question of subjectivity and any possibility of a 'we', of a being-with, are already inscribed within a logic of the question, of being questioned. The call of conscience is first brought up by Heidegger in *Being and Time*, Division Two, Chapter Two¹²⁵ and discussed by Derrida in *Faith and Knowledge*¹²⁶ and *Heidegger's Ear*,¹²⁷ whilst the question forms the subject of Derrida's analysis in *Of Spirit*.¹²⁸ The call of conscience is best understood as part of the realm of discourse, as a modality of being in the world, and singularises insofar as it calls on us to understand, 'giving us to understand',¹²⁹ silently.¹³⁰ It is experienced as uncanny or alien to Dasein's ear, since it surfaces within the context of the idle chatter of *das Man* and does not speak in the voice of *Das Man*, which Dasein is accustomed to in the forgetfulness of Being.¹³¹ Since the call of conscience is made *to* Dasein¹³² but also appears to come *from* within Dasein, yet at the same time 'overcomes'¹³³ Dasein, it could be argued that the phenomenon of the call, of Dasein calling itself from itself, provides the backdrop to Lévinas's concept of the other-within-the-same. The 'message' of the call¹³⁴ is also a crucial facet in the understanding of the phenomenon, since it is the fact that Dasein is guilty insofar as it exists at all, as 'thrownness', as the general structure of being in the world.¹³⁵ Moreover, since the call always already arises within the context of *Das Man*, and insofar as Dasein is always amongst others, a case could be made for what I will call the Lévinasian third-in-the-eyes-of-the-other-within-the-same being prefigured in Heidegger's concept of the call of conscience and singularity as a calling into question. It is in the phenomenological experience of

¹²⁴ Jacques Derrida, *Of Spirit*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 17, emphasis in the original.

¹²⁵ Heidegger, *B.T. op. cit.*, §54 ff.

¹²⁶ Jacques Derrida, 'Faith and Knowledge', in Jacques Derrida, *Acts of Religion*, (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 40-101.

¹²⁷ Jacques Derrida, 'Heidegger's Ear: Philopolemology (Geschlecht IV)', in John Sallis (ed.), *Reading Heidegger: Commemorations* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), pp. 163- 218.

¹²⁸ Jacques Derrida, *Of Spirit*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 17, emphasis in the original.

¹²⁹ Martin Heidegger, *B.T.*, p. 271.

¹³⁰ Since the formal analysis of the question in *B.T.* arises before the analysis of Dasein. *B.T.*, p. 17 ff.

¹³¹ Martin Heidegger, *B.T.*, §59, p. 85 f.

¹³² *B.T.*, p. 272.

¹³³ *B.T.*, p. 275. See Tanja Staehler, 'Heidegger, Derrida, the Question and the Call', in *Phenomenology*, 2010, vol. IV: Northern Europe, edited D. Moran & H. R. Sepp, Zetabooks, p. 6.

¹³⁴ Martin Heidegger, *op. cit.*, §58,

¹³⁵ Martin Heidegger, *B.T.*, *op. cit.*

the call of conscience as alien, and uncanny, as well as the development of subjectivity as ‘rended’ from the inside, insofar as the call of conscience singularises Dasein, that one could ‘hear’ the Lévinasian concept of the other-within-the-same.¹³⁶ Derrida has otherwise provided a close analysis of Heidegger’s cursory remarks on hearing the voice of the friend¹³⁷ ‘whom every Dasein carries with it.’¹³⁸ However, since there is no necessary connection between the two phenomena, and Heidegger’s remarks on the concept are minimal, the analysis shall not be pursued further. Instead, the idea of singularisation as splitting the subject from inside, as the call of conscience and the call issuing from within me, but at the same time exceeding me, will serve as preliminary incursion into a Lévinasian framework, in which singularity is a ‘being called into question’¹³⁹ by the Other from exteriority and later, with *O.B.*, as the other-within-the-same. The idea of friendship as the possibility of minimal community will also be analysed in Chapter Three.

The following chapter explores the concept of the self or singularity as developed by Lévinas, and traces the relation between the self, its ‘world’ and the Other throughout Lévinas’s works, starting with *On Escape* and concluding with *Otherwise than Being*, where subjectivity is redefined as the Other-within-the-same. Having outlined the emergence of the concept of the Other-within-the Same in *O.B.*, I will then map out the concept of the third-within-the-eyes-of-the-Other-in-the-same as a rethinking of the relation between ethics and politics in Lévinas and the possibility of a being-with that moves beyond the dyad of self and Other and, at the same time, does not overlook the political realm in the move towards universality. What, then, is the subject, on a Lévinasian account, and how does Lévinas attempt to highlight the singularising feature of the *event of being*, of the encounter with the *Other*, the other whose being is an issue for *me*?

¹³⁶ The notion of the other-within-the-same will be developed in Chapter Two. The possibility of re-reading Heidegger with Lévinas’s concept of the other-within-the-same in mind will not be pursued here, since it requires a detailed analysis of its own. Insofar as Derrida seems to already read Heidegger with Lévinas in mind, it could be argued this analysis has already started.

¹³⁷ Jacques Derrida, *Heidegger’s Ear*, p. 162 ff.

¹³⁸ Martin Heidegger, *B.T.*, p. 163, §34.

¹³⁹ Lévinas, *T.I.*, *op. cit.*, passim.

III. Lévinas

'Has phenomenology ever had a more urgent challenge to confront the determination of what or possibly who succeeds the subject?' (Jean - Luc Marion, 'The Final Appeal of the Subject')¹⁴⁰

Revisiting the Lévinasian 'Gap' Between Ethics and Politics

Emmanuel Lévinas's thought on ethics has been the focus of a considerable amount of scholarly analysis. Until recently, however, little attention has been paid to his account of the political, with the general consensus being that the political import of Lévinas's ethics is marked by insufficient analysis at best, and inconsistency at worst. This has largely been due to the question of asymmetry between the realms of ethics and politics, and the subsequent 'gap' which emerges with the passage from the an-archic ethical space to the violent, totalising order of politics. Another way of posing the dilemma is to highlight the apparent 'leap' from the *face-to-face*, the locus of the ethical relation for Lévinas, to *the third*, which marks the passage to the political in his thought, the beginning of the question of justice, and the relation of the 'face-to-face' to the wider community. This chapter problematises the Lévinasian 'passage' from ethics to politics, by proposing that the aforementioned 'leap' need not be perceived as an intractable difficulty, marking the apolitical nature of Lévinasian ethics, but, instead, requires renewed attention and analysis.

The Argument

I will argue, against accounts that the culmination of Lévinas's work in *O.B.* leads to political quietude, that a re-examination of the relation between ethics and politics evinces it as mutually-interruptive, with the political, in *O.B.*, being set up as a necessary disruptive supplement at the heart of ethics, just as ethics had been conceptualised as a disruptive force at the heart of war and politics in *Totality and Infinity*.

The productive movement between the two, mutually-interruptive categories provides the basis for a new concept, which disputes the so-called political impasse of Lévinasian ethics. In order to highlight the productivity of the asymmetric relationship between ethics and politics, three

¹⁴⁰Jean-Luc Marion, 'The Final Appeal of the Subject', in Simon Critchley and Peter Dews *Deconstructive Subjectivities* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 85.

texts will be analysed, marking critical points in Lévinas's account of *the third* and the political: 'The Ego and the Totality'¹⁴¹ (henceforth, 'E.T.'), *T.I.* and *O.B.*. I trace the roots of Derrida's concept of community of singularities to Lévinas's own notions of fraternity and fecundity. The analysis reveals that, contrary to most commentators' beliefs, the relation between the ethical and the political in Lévinas's work is mutually interruptive. I also introduce the emergence of ethical subjectivity, as set out in *On Escape*¹⁴² and *Existence and Existents*,¹⁴³ in order to set the scene for what will later emerge as a parallel between the role played in the development of subjectivity by the figure of the Other and the *Other-within-the-same*, and the *il y a*. Before analyzing the emergence of the self as described in *On Escape*, I include a brief incursion into Lévinas's early, pre-war text, 'Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism'.¹⁴⁴ This is motivated by the necessity to illuminate Lévinas's early concern with both the self as embodied being and with what a community might look like that is not grounded in the dangerous ideas of National Socialism, which he critically evaluates in the essay.

Transcendence, captured in the conceptualisation of 'escape' is defined, in Lévinas's early, pre-war work, as 'the need to get out of oneself, that is, to break that most radical and unalterably binding of chains, the fact that the I [*moi*] is oneself [*soi-même*].'¹⁴⁵ The focus comes to be shifted, with *T.I.*, onto the movement of the self towards the Other and, finally, with *O.B.*, towards the *Other-within-the same*. It is one of the contentions of the present study that Lévinas's work does not undergo 'shifts', but that it entails subtle (and sometimes surprising) *shifts in focus* in the sketching of the relationship between the self and the Other, and, by extension, the self and other Others.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴¹ Lévinas, 'The Ego and the Totality', *op. cit.*

¹⁴² Emmanuel Lévinas, *On Escape*, trans. Bettina Bergo (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).

¹⁴³ Lévinas, *Existence and Existents*, trans. Alphonso Lingis [Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2001 (1978)].

¹⁴⁴ Lévinas, 'Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism', trans. Seán Hand, in *Critical Enquiry*, 17, no.1 (1990), pp. 62-71.

¹⁴⁵ Emmanuel Lévinas, *On Escape*, trans. Bettina Bergo (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), p. 55.

¹⁴⁶ I am here in agreement with both Robert Bernasconi and Tanja Staehler, both of whom read Lévinas along these lines. This is, of course, in keeping with Derrida's description of Lévinas's work as 'waves breaking upon a shore' (Jacques Derrida, 'Violence and Metaphysics', in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 312. See, also, Adriaan Peperzak, *To the Other: An Introduction to the Thought of Emmanuel Lévinas* (Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1993), Rudi Visker, *The Inhuman Condition: Looking for Difference after Lévinas and Heidegger* (Dordrecht:

One important motivation for starting with these early texts is to emphasise the development of the relationship between the self and its ‘world’ as embodied and marked by *enjoyment*, preventing a reading which would erroneously attribute a ‘filling of a lack’ to the relationship between the self and Other. This relationship between subjectivity, in its interiority, and the ‘world it lives from’ is one marked by fullness, and is ‘breached’ by the Other, a relationship (between self and Other) which will later be revealed to itself be breached by a third who is always already there. As we shall see, it isn’t merely the interiority of subjectivity that is marked by self-sufficiency, enjoyment and an incommensurability with concepts such as justice, but also the relation between the self and Other. The relation between self and Other is also construed, in *T.I.*, as marked by the hermetic self-sufficiency of a duality which allows for no porosity. Until, that is, the third-in-the-eyes-of-the-Other is evinced as always already breaching this ‘content’ existence.

I will first outline the emergence of subjectivity, as described in *On Escape* and *Existence and Existents* (henceforth, *O.E.* and *E.E.*), as the relationship between self and other as presented in *T.I.*, after which both texts (*T.I.* and *O.B.*) will be considered together, in order to discuss the theme of asymmetry and the figure of *the third*. As will be shown there is a strong continuity, between *T.I.* and *O.B.*, in terms of how the figure of *the third* is introduced. Both accounts relate not a joining of the concept to an initial duo of self and other, but reveal it to always have been there, with and within the figure of the other. Along with the *third*, universality and the whole of humanity are introduced, thereby highlighting Lévinas’s insistence on linking the *face-to-face* with the political and with justice. This will not only dismiss interpretations of Lévinas as, primarily, a philosopher of ethics, with little to offer to the political, but will provide a basis from which to sketch Derrida’s concept of *community of singularities* and how it leads on from Lévinas’s concepts of *fraternity* and *primary sociality*. Before moving onto Lévinas’s development of the emergence of subjectivity in *On Escape*, I shall briefly outline Lévinas’s concept of singularity as *me*.

Singularity

Lévinas’s development of singularity is as much a response to the Hegelian theory of identity, as it is a critique of the Husserlian ‘abstract’ ego or the Heideggerian *Dasein*. If, in Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*,¹⁴⁷ identity is formed through recognition and a return to self,

Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2004) and Bettina Bergo, *Lévinas Between Ethics and Politics: For the Beauty that Adorns the Earth* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999).

147 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. Arnold V. Miller, John Niemeyer Findlay (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).

Lévinas's account of ethical subjectivity is through ipseity/singularity, that is, on the non-correspondence of the self with itself. Lévinas's notion of singularity signifies a self bound to its own traumatic existence, bound to its own self to the extent that the question of a duality, of a split within the self entailed by the return to self of Hegel's theory of identity, does not even arise. Whether through a relation to its own existence (*O. E.* and *E.E.*), a relation to the other conceived as exteriority (*T.I.*) or, indeed, as other-within-the-self (*O.B.*), Lévinas's notion of singularity lacks the resources, as it were, to enact a split, let alone a return to self.

This failure or rather impossibility of the self to return to self (the very definition of singularity, or ipseity) is based on the distinction Lévinas draws between the 'I'/the ego and the *me*, which underscores his entire work. As Robert Bernasconi observes: 'Lévinas explains the distinction between the ego and the self, by saying that persecution strips the ego of its dominating imperialism and so reduces the ego (*le Moi*) to the self (*le soi*)'. Crucially, subjectivity is 'me' (*Moi*) and not the ego (*le Moi*).¹⁴⁸

It is the notion of 'Hineni!', a Hebrew phrase meaning '*Me voici!*', or 'Here I am', that underpins the Lévinasian distinction between the self and the 'me', who is defined by responsibility and responsivity or responsiveness to the Other. One is responsible not merely for the Other, but also for the other's responsibility for 'me'. My responsibility for the Other is defined by excess and overflowing. This passive assignation of responsibility as the very definition of ipseity is what the for-the-other encompassed in '*Hineni!*' signifies. It underlines the presentation, in the Said, through language, of a subject ready to take on the responsibility for everyone and everything, including everyone's responsibility for 'me'.

This 'taking on' of responsibility is not, however, to be understood, in Kantian terms, as the capacity of the subject. It is an assignation, an accusation, which has already taken place, immemorially, as Lévinas would say, an-archically. As we shall see, passivity, obsession and the rupture that the other-within-the-self effectuates within *me*, redefine the understanding of the subject.

Responsible and Responsive Subjectivity

With Lévinas's work, ethics comes to be understood as the encounter with the Other as the basic structure of responsibility. Terms like 'substitution', 'trace', 'hostage', 'alterity', 'obsession' and 'persecution' are ethical modal categories of Lévinas's development of subjectivity as responsive and responsible. Lévinas therefore develops an ethical modality of the

¹⁴⁸ Robert Bernasconi, 'To Which Question is Substitution the Answer' in Simon Critchley and Robert Bernasconi, *The Cambridge Companion to Lévinas*, *op. cit.*, p. 251, n. 6.

phenomenology of sociality. Lévinas even goes as far as equating responsibility with sociality.¹⁴⁹

Religious Hyperbole

There has been a great deal of contention over Lévinas's use of religiously-laden hyperbole throughout his work, but especially in *O.B.* This been the catalyst for much opposition to his project in general. The use of terms like 'divine', 'god' and 'the infinite' and 'revelation' in this section of *O.B.*¹⁵⁰ have served not merely to create confusion amongst commentators on Lévinas's text, but also as evidence for those who would rather relegate his thinking to political quietude or to being hopelessly 'given over' to the religious. I suggest, instead, that Lévinas's use of such terms is methodological, in keeping with the phenomenological analysis he is conducting. Inasmuch as Lévinas is attempting to 'say' the unsayable', present the 'unpresentable', the 'beyond', with linguistic tools not yet (not ever intended to be) at the disposition of the phenomenological tradition he is working within, the use of such terms should be interpreted as strategic.

Lévinas strips away the theological substratum of the notions in order to employ them as heuristic devices for writing about ethical subjectivity. His employment of the term 'revelation', for instance, is emblematic of Lévinas's attempt to invert the traditional interpretation of subjectivity: 'Here [sic] there is an inversion of order: the revelation is made by him that receives it, by the inspired subject whose inspiration, alterity in the same, is the subjectivity or psyche of the subject.' 'The word God', he continues, is 'the *apex* of vocabulary, admission of the stronger than me in me and of the "less than nothing"'. It is 'an abusive word, a beyond themes in a thought that does not yet think or thinks more than it thinks.'¹⁵¹ God, that is, signifies the 'beyond'. It is a formality exceeding the formal pointing towards the excess of Being.¹⁵² The designation of the more-than-formal 'god' as abusive, in this context, suggests a parallelism between the figure of the other-in-me and god-as-beyond. Since throughout *O.B.*, the other is described in increasingly hyperbolic terms, such as trauma, obsession, it seems that there might be the suggestion of a parallelism between the 'abusive' hold on subjectivity that the word 'god' designates and the persecution of the self by the other.

¹⁴⁹ Lévinas, *O.B.*, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

¹⁵⁰ Lévinas, *O.B.*, *op. cit.*, p. 156 ff.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid.

Before moving on to the emergence of the self as outlined in *On Escape*,¹⁵³ I will make a brief incursion into Levinas's early, pre-war essay, 'Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism'. This is to show that as early as 1934, when the essay was written and published in the French journal *Esprit*, Lévinas was concerned with describing the self's being riveted to its body in a manner that did not fall into the deterministic biologism of the emergent National Socialism. The essay also displays a concern with formulating the possibility of a community that holds to the ideas of freedom and equality, whilst providing the necessary belonging that those drawn to National Socialism fall prey to.

Reflections on Hitlerism

An early instance of Lévinas's reflections on the positive character of the self's being riveted to its own body and the possibility of a community can be found in the essay entitled 'Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism' (henceforth, 'R.H.'). Published in 1934, one year before the publication of *On Escape*, in which he sketches the self's enjoyment of its world, 'R.H.' represents an attempt to provide a critical understanding of National Socialism, by bringing both phenomenological analysis and sociology to bear on the subject. The essay stages a confrontation between the ideas of freedom and equality, as entailed in monotheistic religions, liberalism and Marxism in different ways, and that of fate and biological determinism, as offered by National Socialism. Crucial to our analysis is Lévinas's gesture of aligning National Socialism with a deterministic commitment to 'fate' and an aspiration to transcend materiality and universalise itself, in spite of its apparent particularism. Western's philosophy's 'blind spot' and vulnerability to National Socialist ideology is identified very broadly with Heidegger's 'ontology of being concerned with Being' and the discourse on inauthenticity and *Das Man*.¹⁵⁴ This is subtly hinted at, and it is not my aim here to undertake an engagement with Lévinas's condemnation of Heidegger's complicity with 'elemental evil'.¹⁵⁵ The purpose of this brief incursion is to point to Lévinas's early, pre-war concern not only with developing a positive account (as opposed to the deterministic biologism of Nazi ideology) of the self's being riveted to its own body, but also to highlight a concern with a search for an escape from Being, and the basis of a community based on a non-violent relation to the Other. This escape from Being will remain a concern for Lévinas in *On Escape*, though he does not yet find the answer to the escape out of ontology in the figure of the Other.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵³ Lévinas, *On Escape*, *op. cit.*

¹⁵⁴ Lévinas, 'R.H.', *op. cit.*, p. 70.

¹⁵⁵ Lévinas, 'R.H.', *op. cit.*, p. 63.

¹⁵⁶ Lévinas, *On Escape*, *op. cit.*

In 'R.H.', Lévinas finds in liberalism's commitment to the 'sovereign power of reason' a conceptual respite from the threat of the biological determinism of National Socialism. However, unlike monotheistic religions, such as Judaism, which promotes the principles of freedom and equality by establishing a democratic 'community of masters'¹⁵⁷ through the movement of repentance and redemption through god, liberalism fails to provide a concept of community or fraternity, leaving it open to precisely the kind of challenge that National Socialism poses¹⁵⁸. Marxism fuses the concept of fraternity with that of freedom, in the combination of the ideas of class consciousness and materialist philosophy. Where it fails, according to Lévinas, is in its commitment to the sovereign character of freedom, even in its rejection of the absolute character of it. What is lacking, as pointed to above, is precisely the movement of repentance and redemption through the binding figure of a monotheistic god, a movement which, whilst not denying the self's adherence to its body and being in the world, does not commit it to a fateful, biological entrapment. To the ascetic refusal of embodiment, and to the liberal ideal of 'pure reason', which he also takes Marxism to fall prey to, Lévinas proposes, in phenomenological spirit, an account of intentionality which stays faithful to the feeling of embodiment, from whence analysis must begin. The echoes of *On Escape*, published the following year, are clear:

But the body is not only something eternally foreign. Classical interpretations relegate to an inferior level, and regard as a stage to be overcome, a feeling of identity between our bodies and ourselves, which certain circumstances render particularly acute. Not only is it the case that the body is closer and more familiar to us than the rest of the world, and controls our psychological life, our temperament, and our activities. Beyond these banal observations, there is the feeling of identity. Do we not affirm ourselves in the unique warmth of our bodies long before any blossoming of the Self that claims to be separate from the body? (...) And in the impasse of physical pain, is it not the case that the sick man experiences the indivisible simplicity of his being when he turns over in his bed of suffering to find a position that gives him peace? Can we not say that analysis reveals in pain the spirit's opposition to this pain, a rebellion or refusal to remain within it and consequently an attempt to go beyond it? But is it not the case that this attempt is characterized from the very beginning as desperate? Does not the

¹⁵⁷ Lévinas, 'R.H.', p. 71.

¹⁵⁸ For a full analysis of Lévinas's 'R.H.', as well his thought on Judaism and Israel, and the political in a wider sense, please see Howard Caygill, *Lévinas and the Political*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 29 ff.

rebellious spirit remain ineluctably locked within pain? And is it not this despair that constitutes the very foundation of pain?¹⁵⁹

Establishing the experience of being a self as riveted to its own embodiment not only serves as a corrective against ascetic conceptions of the body and the liberal claim to ‘pure reason’, but, crucially, provides another way into embodiment that allows for the notion of freedom, against National Socialist determinism.¹⁶⁰ Additionally, it creates, in one movement, the basis for a community, a fraternity which, whilst not being a biological fraternity bound to dangerous ideas of racial belonging, provides the necessary grounding for a being-together not predicated on murderous exclusionary logic. Having established Lévinas’s early concern both with the framing of the formation of the self as bodily inescapability and an incipient thought on the question of community, we will now move to his development of the self in *On Escape*, through an analysis of the *il y a*.

The *Il y a*

The emergence of the subject for Lévinas begins with an account of the burden of being, an anonymous mode of existence he calls ‘*il y a*’, or ‘*there is*’, named so to signal the inescapability and pure givenness of being in which the subject finds itself. This continuous, endlessly expansive and oppressive source of horror, this process of existence otherwise referred to as *l’exister*, a deliberate use of the French nominalised infinitive, is what prompts the emergence of the subject as an escape from being.¹⁶¹ If the incipient basis for the development of the ‘*il y a*’ can be found in Lévinas’s early essay ‘De L’évasion’, or ‘On Escape’,¹⁶² it is in *Existence and Existents (De l’existence à l’existant)*¹⁶³ where Lévinas, continuing and at the same time leaving the climate of Heidegger’s writings, develops the distinction between

¹⁵⁹ Lévinas, ‘R.H.’, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

¹⁶⁰ I am here in agreement with Howard Caygill’s analysis (Caygill, *Levinas and the Political, op. cit.*). Whereas he focuses on the wider political and philosophical implications of ‘R.H.’, I mean to emphasize the focus on embodiment as a precursor to *On Escape*, and the attention Lévinas gives to the idea of community.

¹⁶¹ The use of the nominalised infinitive aids the understanding of the process of being as continuous and oppressively present.

¹⁶² Lévinas, *O.E., op.cit.*

¹⁶³ Lévinas, *Existence and Existents*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2001 (1978)).

existence and existents.¹⁶⁴ If 'On Escape' charted the emergence of the subject as an escape from existence as manifested in such 'limit situations'¹⁶⁵ as insomnia, indolence, nausea, shame and others, it is in *Existence and Existents* that he begins to sketch the outlines of the alterity that subjectivity escapes towards (the other) although the figure of the other is never as concretely developed as it is in *T.I.*¹⁶⁶ and later works. The anonymous being that subjectivity is in flight from is described, in *O.E.*, as revealing itself when the world 'draws back', such as in the experience of insomnia, where the self keeps vigil to the vortex of expansive being which threatens to engulf it. It is such experiences which prompt the development of subjectivity as a drawing back from the terrifying and inescapable truth that 'being is',¹⁶⁷ from what he calls the 'self-sufficiency' of being and the 'brutality of its assertion'.¹⁶⁸

The Necessity of the Movement out of Being

The analysis meanders thematically from need to pleasure, towards shame, nausea and escape, with important analyses of such phenomena as insomnia and indolence. What is crucial for the present analysis is, firstly, Lévinas's insistence that there is a necessary movement out of being, finally resulting in the formation of subjectivity, and secondly, the consequences of that emergence in binding the 'I' to itself and concomitantly foreclosing the possibility of a return to a secure identity. It is this being riveted to itself of the ego that he will later deem to be the high cost of the failed flight out of being with the formation of subjectivity. The high price is the very definition of subjectivity of later works, of singularisation, and the necessary relation of the ego to its own self in the process of shedding the weight of anonymous being. The relation between the self and the Other will eventually emerge as the only movement within which the self is not smothered by its own self-referentiality.

¹⁶⁴ The thrownness of being into which Dasein finds itself, as well as the distinction between being and beings, which Lévinas renames existence and existents, are, of course, already present in Heidegger's *Being and Time* and form the basis for much of Lévinas's critical engagement with that work. Unlike Heidegger, however, Lévinas does not take Being to be the being *of a being*, but understands being as independent of beings. That is, in Lévinas's terms, existence is taken to be independent of existents, and eventually, with *Totality and Infinity*, the movement of escape from it leads to the figure of the other and transcendence.

¹⁶⁵ Lévinas, *O.E.*, *op.cit.*, p.34.

¹⁶⁶ Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969).

¹⁶⁷ Lévinas, *O.E.*, *op.cit.*, p. 51.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

The movement out of being is one which is not specified in *O. E.* beyond a necessity, later to be revealed as a necessary movement towards the other, whereas the significance of the self's non-correspondence with itself is one which will underscore all of Lévinas's future writings. The reason pure being, in this early text, is experienced through escape, and the logic behind the use of the powerfully evocative metaphors for this limit experience, is the double bind of the simultaneous experiences of the pressing demand to get out of being, and its impossibility. If the necessity is due to the insufferable burden of anonymous being's immense weight, of the horror of being as such, the impossibility to get out of being is bound to the indeterminate mode of experience we are faced with in nausea, where the self is both needful of delivery from an insufferable state and impossibly committed to suffering it. Nausea, that is, is the experience of the pure horror of being because it holds within it the tension between the need to escape and the impossibility of doing so.

The Ears to Respond to the Other

As mentioned above, it is the need to escape from the self that the experience of the horror of being exposes, through such phenomena as nausea and shame. Escaping is precisely the need to 'get out of oneself, [...] *to break that most radical and unalterably binding of chains, the fact that the I [moi] is oneself [soi-même]*'.¹⁶⁹ The fissure within the self, between what Lévinas calls *le moi* and *le soi*, is one on the basis of which the relationship of substitution with the other will be built, starting with *Existence and Existents* and culminating in *O.B.*, where asymmetry is developed to the point of the self taking responsibility for its own persecution by the other. If *le moi*, (the 'me') could be understood to signal the singularity of the ego which is, in the later works, called to respond to the ethical demand of the other, *le soi*, (the 'I', or the 'ego') falls into the universalised, impersonal self of Western philosophy, which refuses or fails to answer to the ethical demand precisely on the basis of its generality. To paraphrase Lévinas's attack on the Heideggerian Dasein, we might say that the generalized self - *le soi* – lacks the ears needed to hear and respond to the call of the other.¹⁷⁰

Fleeing Being

The distinction is one which is important to the development of the ethical relation with *alterity* precisely due to the rift introduced into the heart of being. For, as will emerge in later works, it is the relationship with the figure of the other which finally prevents the subject from being self-

¹⁶⁹ Lévinas, *O.E.*, *op.cit.*, p.55.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. 'Dasein (...) is never hungry.' Lévinas, *T.I.*, *op.cit.*, p.134.

identical by lodging itself within the core of its being, between the ego and self. It should be noted, at this point, that, even though that which subjectivity escapes towards is never specified in *O. E.*, ‘getting out of being’ should never be understood as a movement of the self towards the transcendental, or the infinity of its possibilities, out of the limited nature of being. Lévinas is clear, even at this point, that the movement out of being is an escape out of being ‘one’, identical to and at peace with itself. ‘It is being itself or the ‘one-self’ from which escape flees, and in no wise being’s limitation. In escape, the I flees itself, not in opposition to the infinity of what it is [nor] of what it will become, but rather due to the fact that it is or that it becomes.’¹⁷¹ There is, it seems, a parallel between the horror of being and the terror of the ‘oneness’ of being, both impossible, both insufferable, both to be delivered through the figure of the other.

Enjoyment and Interiority

The riveting of the I to itself in the experience of Being signals the importance of the modality of sensibility in the development of subjectivity. In spite of the escape from existence being formulated in terms of need, Being is never an experience, manifested in such phenomena as nausea and anxiety. Although these do form part of the analysis of the experience of existence, Lévinas is also careful to stress the *enjoyment* which sensible beings cannot help but experience in existing. Lévinas’s Being is never the abstract one he sees Heidegger as positing. Although one might be tempted to interpret Lévinas’s analysis of the enjoyment of existence in terms of the self experiencing the phenomena described above, it is important to note that for Lévinas, the self *is* these phenomena, in the experience of Being.¹⁷² The self does not *have* the experience of nausea, shame, etc., but *is* these modalities of Being. The need for escape, for transcendence out of the *il y a*, towards the Other, provides a strong parallel with Lévinas’s later development of the transcendence of *totality* through the movement of desire, in exteriority. The *il y a* constitutes, in other words, an early version of the later *totality*.

Preempting Totality

Though the concept of totality is not a focus of this study, suffice it to say that Lévinas generally conceives of it as a sphere marked by at least temporary coagulation, such as the State or society, and founded on the principle of the exclusion of that which defines it (in a State, the foreigner, for instance, or the other in general for any community). A totality is better thought of as something *temporarily* fixed, and not allowing any breaches, due to the fact that, in spite of

¹⁷¹ Lévinas, *O.E.*, *op.cit.*, p.55.

¹⁷² I am capitalising Being to signal its difference from ‘being’, as in Heidegger’s *Being and Time*, *op. cit.*

its being pitched against infinity throughout Lévinas's works, and especially *T.I.*, it is eventually revealed to have always already been interrupted by that which it excludes (in *T.I.*, infinity as the movement of desire towards the Other in exteriority).¹⁷³

The theme of transcendence, prominent even in these early, pre-war works, is encapsulated in *O.E.* in the movement out of existence towards the Other, movement which is, importantly, constituted not by need understood as *lack*, but by desire, out of the fullness and positive experience of Being as enjoyment. The importance of the modality of sensibility and implicitly, *enjoyment* and self-sufficiency as defining *interiority* for Lévinas will emerge below, in the analysis of *O.B.*

Another important difference from Heidegger's account in *Being and Time* is the insistence on presence, in *O.E.*, and, in fact, throughout Lévinas's works. The various modalities of existence disclose it as presence, even if it is one the self needs to escape from, and not as 'withdrawal' or 'disclosure'¹⁷⁴, as in Heidegger. Given that *O.E.* is, in spite of differences from later works, still underpinned by the Lévinasian preoccupation with fleshing out the relation between the self and the Other, it could be argued that the escape from existence, from the *il y a*, is a corollary of the movement towards the Other. Although developed in detail in Lévinas's later work, in *Time and the Other* (henceforth, *T.O.*) the logic of time and the parameters of formal logic are still distorted, in *O.E.*. It looks, *prima facie*, as though the subjectivity 'preceding' the movement of desire towards the Other and the formation of subjectivity in the ensuing 'escape' from Being, is one which 'exists' before the event of singularisation. It could, however, be argued that there is a necessity in singularisation having already occurred, in the Other having already *affected* and *effected* the formation of subjectivity, in so far as the encounter with the Other occurs on a quasi-transcendental level, both metaphysical and concrete.

Incipient Creatuality

O.E. is also the locus for the emergence of another theme crucial for the analysis of *O.B.*, and the concept of *community of singularities*: that of creatuality (*la créaturalité*), the *creature*, 'confined in the fait accompli of creation'.¹⁷⁵ The 'way of being a creature'¹⁷⁶ is a consistent

¹⁷³ Lévinas, *T.I.*, *op. cit.*

¹⁷⁴ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, *op. cit.*

¹⁷⁵ Lévinas, *O.E.*, *op.cit.*, p. 72.

¹⁷⁶ 'This freedom enveloped in a responsibility which it does not succeed in shouldering is the way of being a creature, the unlimited passivity of a self, the unconditionality of a self' (Lévinas, *O.B.*, *op.cit.*, p. 195, n.13).

theme in Lévinas's development of the relation between subjectivity and its 'world', as well as between the self and the Other. In so far as *creaturality* entails a passivity of being, a being affected by the environment 'in spite of itself', it constitutes a 'precursor' to the modality of absolute passivity employed by Lévinas in the development of subjectivity in *O.B.* Since *creaturality* also seems to be a modality of being in *The Ego and the Totality* (1954),¹⁷⁷ and *T.I.*, it could be seen as an operative concept throughout Lévinas's works. Like fraternity and fecundity, analysed below, it encapsulates the dual aspect of subjectivity: the relation to and concomitant difference from the Other.¹⁷⁸ Finally, in Lévinas's analysis of Derrida's writings, the concept of *creatureliness* comes to encapsulate one apparently unacknowledged progressive aspect of Derrida's writings, which, according to Lévinas in *Wholly Otherwise*, could pave the way towards a new kind of subjectivity.

'It will probably be less willingly acknowledged – and Derrida would probably deny it – that this critique of Being in its eternal presence of ideality allows, for the first time in the history of the West, the thought of the *Being of the creature* (*l'être de la créature*) without recourse to an ontic account of divine operation, without from the start treating the "Being" ("être") of the creature like a being (*un étant*)...' ¹⁷⁹

Since creaturalty is a notion which traverses all of Lévinas's works, up to and including his engagement with Derrida's thought in *Wholly Otherwise*,¹⁸⁰ an incursion into the concept is necessary at this point, with reference to other Lévinasian works.

¹⁷⁷ Although not explicitly named *creaturality*, Lévinas's concept of 'living beings' in *E.T.*, comes close to his development of 'the creature'. Both are defined in terms of passivity. The crucial distinction is that whilst the creature can and, indeed, *is* breached by exteriority and the Other, the living being cannot. Or, rather, a breach of the living being's interiority would lead to its death. Both the creature and the living being possess the capacity for enjoyment in their hermetic existence 'before' the breach of exteriority (the 'before' is here not a reference to a temporal order, but, rather, a moment in Lévinas's analysis, as emphasised throughout this study). Like the creature, whose interiority is revealed, in Lévinas's works, to be always already breached and broached by the Other, living beings are also breached by exteriority all the time (one assumes, according to Lévinas's analysis, before their death).

¹⁷⁸ Simon Critchley analyses *creatureliness* in connection with the Judaic tradition and writes of the dual aspect of the concept in terms of a 'dependence to and distinction from the alterity of a creator' (Simon Critchley and Peter Dews, *Deconstructive Subjectivities* (Albany: State University of New York, 1996), p.35).

¹⁷⁹ Emmanuel Lévinas, 'Wholly Otherwise', in *Re-Reading Lévinas*, ed. Simon Critchley and Robert Bernasconi (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), p.6.

¹⁸⁰ Lévinas, 'Wholly Otherwise', *op. cit.*

Creaturality

Creatureliness or *creaturality* (la créaturalité) is a modality of being developed throughout Lévinas's works, starting with *O.E.*, and throughout 'E.T.', *E.E.*, *T.I.* and culminating with *O.B.*, where it is fleshed out as extreme passivity. Insofar as it designates lack of control over existence, extreme permeability to external factors and vulnerability in all its exposedness, the term constitutes the ideal modal vehicle for Lévinas to describe the passivity of being affected by the Other.

'This freedom enveloped in a responsibility which it does not succeed in shouldering is the way of being a creature, the unlimited passivity of a self, the unconditionality of a self.'¹⁸¹ Although, in conceptualising *creaturality* as passivity in relation to a 'creator', Lévinas underlines both the distinction between the two terms (creature and creator) and the dependence of the creature on its creator,¹⁸² thus stressing its passivity, it is perhaps not helpful to construe creaturality in relation to a creator at all. It is, of course, the case that Lévinas criticises the ontological basis of such a construal and concomitantly strips the concepts of their theological underpinnings. However, it may be less misleading if one was to think of *creaturality* as being in an asymmetric relation to itself and to the destabilising Other-within (determining said schism), rather than to a creator, construed as external.

Emergence of the Self out of the *Il y a*

Returning to the theme of the emergence of subjectivity, a brief look at Lévinas's 1947 text *Existence and Existents*¹⁸³ (henceforth, *E.E.*) will clarify the self's development out the indeterminateness of the *il y a*. Seen by Lévinas as a continuation of his 1935 essay *On Escape*,¹⁸⁴ *Existence and Existents*, or *De l'existence à l'existant* in French, furthers his search for a path out of being, for a way to surpass it. Named so to signal the movement of subjectivity out of the impersonal being of the *il y a* and into the singular existence of the human subject, the text traces the ego's actively taking up a position within being. This position is not one of stability and finality, for the ego will always be a locus of unrest, and the figure of the other will always already have ensured its instability. Given that the movement is one from pure existence (Being) to the existent (subject), this movement could be understood as the becoming-existent

¹⁸¹ Lévinas, *O.B.*, *op.cit.*, p.195, n.13.

¹⁸² Critchley, *Deconstructive Subjectivities*, *op.cit.*, p.35.

¹⁸³ Lévinas, *E.E.*, *op.cit.*

¹⁸⁴ Lévinas, *O.E.*, *op.cit.*, pp. 373-92.

of the event of existence. The text, which Lévinas refers to as a ‘preparatory study’, also sets the scene for the analysis of transcendence and Plato’s notion of the ‘Good Beyond Being’, as well as the outline of a wider enquiry into the relationship with the Other as a movement towards the Good.

Indispensable for the present analysis is the place of the notion of *ex-cedence* within the text, a development of the earlier notion of ‘escape’ as a movement out of Being, which nonetheless maintains a ‘foothold in Being’¹⁸⁵. A compound formed of the Greek ‘ex-’ (ἐξω), meaning ‘outside of’ and ‘transcendence’, *ex-cedence* signals precisely the movement out of being towards the Good, through the figure of the Other, marked by an impossibility of escaping being completely. This is an important part of what Lévinas means when using the phrase ‘a foothold in being’ (ibid.). The dual nature of this notion is crucial for an understanding of his analysis of the relationship with the Other, for which *T.I.* and *O.B.* are the seminal texts.

Becoming Otherwise

The formal structure of the enquiry in *O. E.* is retained, with the metaphor of escape being supplanted by other metaphors chosen to signify the modes of presence and manifestations of existence in later writings. In spite of it being a very early elaboration of subjectivity’s need (and, importantly, *desire*) to ‘become otherwise’, strong continuities with this early account of existence do run through his later work. One important modification is that the ethical encounter with alterity becomes concretised within the figure of the other and the ‘face-to-face’. Both *O.E.* and *E. E.* are not only important accounts of the emergence of the self, but mark a continuity with his later work through the preoccupation with identity and the impossibility of its being one, homogenous, self-same and at peace.

An important manifestation of transcendence in both *E.E.* and *T.O.* is discussed under the headings of *fecundity* and *paternity*, with the figure of the son epitomising the Other, as both ‘myself’ and ‘not-myself’.¹⁸⁶ These concepts mark a problematic engagement¹⁸⁷ with rather traditional tropes for a being-with-the-other as precursors to Derrida’s *community of singularities*.¹⁸⁸ We shall return to this in Chapter Three.

¹⁸⁵ Lévinas, *E.E.*, *op.cit.*, Preface, xxvii.

¹⁸⁶ Lévinas, *E.E.*, *op.cit.*, p. xiii, pp.95, 100 and *T.O.*, *op.cit.* pp. 37 and 91–94.

¹⁸⁷ Jacques Derrida and feminist commentators have taken issue with the problematic nature of these concepts. We shall come back to this below.

¹⁸⁸ See, for instance: ‘Asymmetrical intersubjectivity is the locus of transcendence in which the subject, while preserving its structure’s subject, has the possibility of not inevitably returning to itself, the

The Ego and the Totality

The other, in 'The Ego and the Totality' (henceforth, 'E.T.') is conceived of in terms which situate it in a relation of equality to the ego. This contrasts starkly with *T.I.*, where the concept of the other is construed as standing in an asymmetrical relation to the self through height and exteriority, or *O.B.*, which sees the development of the notion of the *other-within-the-self*. In a move retaining much of the structure of the Hegelian dialectic, Lévinas writes of the other as commanding 'me' and coming from exteriority. Importantly, however, as we shall see below, Lévinas retains some elements of the structure of the master-slave dialectic in conceiving of the relation between self and other in terms of *equality*, *reciprocity* and *respect*.¹⁸⁹ 'E.T.' is also one of the earliest works where the concept of the third party is analysed, and concludes, against opinions that Lévinas's pre-T.I. work involves a wholesale condemnation of politics,¹⁹⁰ a strong argument for the necessity of numbering, quantification and, implicitly, politics in Lévinas's work.

'E.T.' starts on the note of a comparison between life and thought, living beings versus thinking beings, in which the former term in each dyad refers to mere organisms and the latter to humankind. The demarcating element between the two categories appears, in this essay, to be exteriority. For, if a thinking being is affected by exteriority, a living being is not. If a thinking being conceives itself, is aware of itself as part of a totality, and structures itself in relation to it, a living being does not, but falls prey to the caprices of the environment in which it lives.¹⁹¹ Importantly, the concept of totality, here, would best be understood as close to the Husserlian 'world', although there is a crucial reversal taking place. Husserl's concept of 'life-world' (*Lebenswelt*) is the pre-theoretical world of experience, arrived at through the application of the transcendental reduction. It is the world of phenomena, a pre-given general structure of experience, which enables subjectivity to surface and develop.¹⁹²

possibility of being fecund and (to anticipate what we shall examine later) having a son.' (Lévinas, *E.E. op.cit.*, p.100).

¹⁸⁹ Lévinas, *E.T.*, *op.cit.*, pp.43-44 and *passim*.

¹⁹⁰ See, for e.g., Peter Dews, 'Lévinas: Ethics à L'Outrance' in *The Problem of Evil* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008).

¹⁹¹ It is interesting to note here that Lévinas, again, reverses the usual dichotomy of life versus death, in which, in Darwinian spirit, mere living beings are characterized as static, and thus, closer to a death-like status than more evolved and evolving creatures such as humans. Lévinas, here, it seems, opposes thought to life.

¹⁹² Edmund Husserl, *Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (Evanston: Northwest University Press, 1970) p.43 and *passim*.

Living Beings

In Lévinas's work, the environment, totality as perceived by living beings, is confused, in the absence of thought, with interiority, self-sameness and as extension of the being's attributes, *cosubstantiality*. This, Lévinas calls *cynical* behaviour. That is, in the philosophical meaning of the term, derived from the Cynici, closedness to exteriority.¹⁹³ Ultimately, the environment is perceived as interiority, sameness and an outward-facing determination of its surrounding world, without a reciprocal process ever occurring. What living beings *lack* is exteriority. And it is precisely within exteriority (the 'outside' of the blindness which a preoccupation with one's or its own being *is*) that the other is located. Living beings are not merely deaf and blind to the other, to anything other, but lack the capacity, conferred by thought, to be affected by something coming from the outside.¹⁹⁴ This is clearly a rather traditional construal of the difference between 'living beings' and 'humans'. Lévinas is here still working within the early Heideggerian framework of 'care' and 'concern' for one's own being as the distinguishing characteristic of Dasein, as opposed to other beings. The scope for the extension of Lévinas's notion of the other to the non-human will be elaborated in Chapter Three, through the work of Jacques Derrida's 'The Other Animal' and the critique of Lévinas's concept of fraternity/community as not only androcentric, but anthropocentric.

Being affected as such would result, for living beings, in death, of which the opposite is freedom (here conceived, presumably, in the strict sense of freedom to live). The only instance of a living being's interaction with the totality, or of coming up against it as something other, is the moment of its death, time at which or *beyond* which an awareness of the totality as difference would come too late. Strictly speaking, the exterior world does not exist for living beings, given a lack of awareness of it.¹⁹⁵ It is only thinking beings whose interior world is illuminated by thought, coming to them from exteriority, from the other, and for whom the totality is perceived as something separate, in which they live; only thinking beings that are capable of forming a relationship with this totality, as singularities.

¹⁹³ Members of the philosophical school founded by Antisthenes who chose to lead a life closed off from custom, common morality, culture, state and life (Emmanuel Lévinas, 'E.T.', *op.cit.*, p.25). An important difference is that the *Cynici* chose this particular mode of life whereas, for Lévinas, living beings do not choose.

¹⁹⁴ Lévinas, 'E.T.', in *Collected Papers*, *op. cit.*, p. 25 f.

¹⁹⁵ Lévinas, 'E.T.', *op.cit.*, p.27.

Against Aristotle's definition of humans as '*animale rationale*', Lévinas writes, poignantly 'rational man [i.e. *animale rationale*] cannot mean an animal saddled with reason; the interpenetration of the terms indicate an original structure.'¹⁹⁶ Man is not an animal whose distinctive features lie in his ability to think. Thought defines it. In order to set apart the singularity, non-sameness to self and mutability of the ego (mutability because possessing the capacity to be affected by the other), Lévinas distinguishes between an 'I' and the 'me', a distinction which will underscore most of his philosophical work. In conceiving of the ego as a 'me', a singular structure non-identical to any other or even itself, Lévinas is stressing the calling into question of the ego by the other, a call which is singularly addressed to *this* self and not any other - hence, 'me'.¹⁹⁷ The relationship between the ego and the totality we have just outlined is the central concern of Lévinas's 1954 essay, and the resounding answer to the question of how the ego relates to the totality. How the ego is, and, at the same time, *is not* part of the totality, is, we shall see, located within its relationship with the other and the third. It is not coincidentally that Lévinas moves, after differentiating between the 'me' and the 'I', to discussing society, the character of which must have the structure of an un-numberable community, of simultaneous participation and non-participation.¹⁹⁸ In an early introduction of his concept of *the face*, Lévinas provides a definition for society, striking as much for its clarity as for its Hegelian undertones:¹⁹⁹ 'This relationship of both participation and separation which marks the advent of, and the *a priori* proper to thought, in which the bonds between the parts are constituted only by the freedom of the parts, is a society, is beings that speak, that face one another.'²⁰⁰

Society, that is, is constituted through both separation and participation. So far, there is little difference between the Lévinasian conception of community and any other traditional structure of a liberal society, for instance. The crucial difference is, however, in the Lévinasian redefinition of certain terms, including *freedom*, which is revealed as the 'freedom of the other' and not 'my freedom', and the eventual deeming of the separation and participation that constitute community as 'not radical enough'.²⁰¹ Totality, then, in which the ego both is and is

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., p.27.

¹⁹⁷ Lévinas, 'E.T.', *op.cit.*, p.27.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., p.28.

¹⁹⁹ Lévinas broadly identifies the Hegelian dialectic with a tendency to outline the relationship between self and other in terms of a subsumption of the other to the self.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., p.28.

²⁰¹ This will be elaborated in the section on the third, below.

not, is manifested, by virtue of thought, as ‘a face’ that confronts me, not merely as a milieu, an element in which ‘the ego is immersed’.²⁰²

Thought here takes on the monumental character of being that which the relationship between the ego and the totality ultimately *is*. It is eventually crystallized into the term *conscience*, or the ‘moral conditions for thought’ which are then realised, in turn, in the work of economic justice.²⁰³ Lévinas’s aim in the essay is, otherwise, amongst other things, a restoration of the necessity for the work of ‘economic justice’, and what we will call a ‘numberable’ community of singularities. The failure to think otherness beyond its humanist and androcentric context is, as mentioned above, one of the strikingly conservative facets of Lévinas’s thinking of the other. Indeed, were one to follow the logic of Lévinas’s arguments concerning otherness, one would undoubtedly be led to the extension of the category of other to animals, and other non-human beings, as Derrida famously is.²⁰⁴

The Third Man

Treated in conjunction with a demonstration on why love, in the context of the couple, does not fulfill the condition for justice, the notion of the third, in ‘E.T.’, is the site of politics for Lévinas. In the context of an indictment of the Christian notions of love and forgiveness, notions he finds inadequate for justice, emerges the need for an alternative. And it is this alternative, the third, necessarily implied by the concept of society, which offers a respite from the world of the couple. The indictment of the concept of the couple for Lévinas, based on recognising that love involves the negation of society, is primarily focused around its corollary - the negation of the possibility for questions of justice to arise. In the ‘autarchic’ society of solitudes²⁰⁵ that the couple essentially is, universality is excluded and the third man²⁰⁶ assumes the role of disturbing the intimacy. He goes on to describe singularity as defined by this relationship with the third party, a relationship which neither resembles the dual intimacy of the couple, nor one’s intimacy with oneself. Politics and the third man are introduced as an alternative, or a ‘third way’ to

²⁰² Ibid., p.28.

²⁰³ Ibid., p.28.

²⁰⁴ This has been taken up by a number of contemporary philosophers, including Simon Glendinning *Being with Others* (London: Routledge, 1998).

²⁰⁵ Lévinas, ‘E.T.’, *op.cit.*, pp.30-31.

²⁰⁶ It is important to note that Lévinas uses three terms interchangeably for the notion of the third in this essay (based on the English translation), all occurring in the same paragraph, at points: ‘third parties’, ‘third man’, ‘third person.’ Ibid., p.30.

understanding the totality of egos which are without conceptual unity, but in relationship with one another,²⁰⁷ leading to the conclusion that there can only be real justice when the injustice committed is unpardonable - that is, paradoxically, when there is no real possibility for justice. We will come back to the questions of justice and category in the section on 'Money', below.

One important Hegelian trace in Lévinas's argument in 'E.T.' is the emphasis on the concepts of *respect, reciprocity, dignity, freedom, work* and *original equality*,²⁰⁸ as opposed to the concepts of *responsibility, indifference, substitution*. In a move which is diametrically opposed to his position in *O.B.*, in which *substitution* and *submission* to the other become the very definition of subjectivity²⁰⁹ Lévinas writes: '[I]f recognition were a *submission* to him, the submission would take all its worth away from my recognition; recognition by submission would annul my *dignity*, through which recognition has validity (my emphasis).'²¹⁰ Submission, in this work, is tantamount to humiliation, which, in depriving the ego of *respect* and the position of *original equality*, would preclude the possibility for justice. '[F]or this command to not involve humiliation – which would take from me the very possibility of showing respect, the command I receive must also be a command to command him who commands me.'²¹¹ That is, the position of humiliation which a submission to the other would entail would render impossible the work of commanding the other to command me, process which is the very condition for there being a 'we'.²¹²

The work of being together, in 'E.T.', is effected through a reciprocal relation of commanding each other to command.²¹³ This, for Lévinas, is the work of justice, which presupposes an original equality, and in which 'respect is a relationship between equals'. In a further removedness from the totality engulfing the ego in the nocturnal world of the *il y a*, it is the command from identity to identity which disengages the ego from the totality. Escape is here

²⁰⁷ Ibid., p.37.

²⁰⁸ Hegelian trace only insofar as it has to do with reification, on Lévinas's understanding, and the master-slave dialectic.

²⁰⁹ Lévinas, *op cit.* The latter set of terms shall be analysed in detail below, in the section on *O.B.*

²¹⁰ Lévinas, 'E.T.', *op.cit.*, p.43.

²¹¹ Ibid., p.43.

²¹² Ibid., pp.43 f.

²¹³ The development of this idea of community as the work of being together through command is something which will be expanded on in the section on *Totality and Infinity*, through the analysis of the 'command that commands commanding' (Lévinas, *T.I.*, *op. cit.*, p. 213). This will later be contrasted with 'saying saying saying itself' (Lévinas, *O.B.*, *op.cit.*, p.143), in order to emphasise the development of the notion of community throughout Lévinas's work.

not merely into the relation of exteriority with the other, but into accomplishing the work of being together, through recognition, reciprocity, respect and original equality, all of which, in turn, are effected through speech. In a further reversal of the traditional Hobbesian-derived theories of justice, in which respect is the *outcome* of a contract and follows ethics, or morality, for Lévinas respect becomes the very *condition* for the possibility of ethics. The section on *the third* ends on the rather liberal note of situating the work of being together within economic justice, and on the inside of the *totality*, against those who misunderstand Lévinas to be an idealistic exponent of the ‘kingdom of pure respect’.²¹⁴

Money

It is in the last section of the essay, entitled ‘Money’, that Lévinas sketches out the ‘numberable’ character of community, having delineated what singularity and the ‘third party’ are. The element which, for Lévinas, suggests a restoration of ‘economy’ as a form of totality, or finds in money a characteristic resistant to the discarding of the concept, is the ‘unnumberable’ character of the singularities which encompass it. The move is also strongly suggestive of a liberal conception of the individual as grounded in irreplaceability. We shall see, however, that this irreplaceability or the ‘me’ that is Lévinas’s ‘individual’, does not originate in itself, does not spring up in self-referentiality, but owes its being to the other. ‘In economy’, Lévinas writes, ‘the element where a will can have a hold on another without destroying it as a will, there is brought about the totalization of absolutely singular beings, for which there are no concepts, and which by reason of their very singularity resist addition.’²¹⁵ In other words, there is, in money, the power to concomitantly include individuals in the totality (since it is through money that individuals themselves are bought, sold, and ultimately singularised) and to exclude them from the totality (since, in transactions, individuals are ‘disposed of’).²¹⁶

The important factor here is, for Lévinas, the correspondence (to some degree) of money to an individual, since it is ‘always, to some extent, wages’ and, implicitly, the inalienable character

²¹⁴ Apart from being an indictment of the Marxist understanding of ‘capital’, a theme running throughout the essay, this phrase could also be an allusion to or a subtle attack on Kant’s *Perpetual Peace* essay, in which the latter develops his theory on the ‘Kingdom of Ends’ [Kant, I. “Perpetual Peace”, in Kant, I., *Political Writings*, ed. Hans Reiss, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991)]. This is supported by an earlier, direct reference to Kant’s ‘Kingdom of Ends’ and Lévinas’s disagreement with the fact that ‘reasons could ever constitute a kingdom’ (Emmanuel Lévinas, ‘E.T.’, *op.cit.*, p.37).

²¹⁵ Lévinas, ‘E.T.’, *op.cit.*, p.44.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.45.

of a person.²¹⁷ Here, again, we find striking affinities within Lévinas's writing with the liberal project, in the form of his searing attack on Marxism. Lévinas's 'E.T.', *T.I.* and *O.B.*, for instance, are peppered with references to the liberal system being in a better position to recognise the alterity of the other than other political systems, due to its being founded on the Kantian idea of the intrinsic *value* of a human being.²¹⁸ Lévinas does not differentiate between different forms of liberalism. It seems, however, that the form of liberalism which coheres, to some extent, with the idea of engagement with the other taking place within a discursive horizon (although, of course, for Lévinas discourse is much more than language) might look like a deliberative democracy. I expand on the possibility of such an analysis in the Suggestions for Further Research.

Returning to the critique Lévinas levels at Marx, it appears that what Lévinas is suggesting is that Marx has misunderstood the concept of money, or has done away with it before comprehending its value. 'Money, whose metaphysical importance has perhaps not yet been measured (despite the abundance of economic and sociological studies which have been devoted to it) (...) [is] thus the abstract element in which is brought about the generalization of that which has no concept, the equating of that which has no quantity.' One might think that it is precisely the generalizing, totalising power of money, which corrupts the will that affects it, which would result in Lévinas dismissing the concept as unethical. But it is precisely in its power to exchange an abstract symbol for an unnumberable singularity, that is, to render singularities numberable, and hold communities together, that Lévinas's interest in it lies. 'It is', he writes, 'an ambiguous medium where persons are integrated into the order of commodities, yet where they still remain persons.'²¹⁹

²¹⁷ Ibid., p.45.

²¹⁸ Immanuel Kant, *Doctrine of Virtue, Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. and ed., Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

²¹⁹ The assumption that a person's self is inalienable in a transaction beyond his power is a politically questionable one for a number of people, and echoes Sartre's analysis of freedom, whereby a slave in chains is as free as his master [Sartre, J.P., *L'Existentialisme est un Humanisme*, trans. Philip Mairet (London: Eyre Methuen, 1973)]. It also echoes the Hegelian master-slave dialectic, where 'the slave tacitly gives his assent to the masters who buy him' (Emmanuel Lévinas, 'E.T.', *op.cit.*, p.45) and parallels the liberal conception of freedom and inalienability of self. The critique of such a construction is beyond the scope of this chapter. Suffice it to say that it is this inalienable character of a person's self encompassed in the symbol of money which, for Lévinas, is important.

The Justice in Money

The justice which money institutes is one not derivable from absolute difference, but from category. Category, that is, is what is necessary for the 'we' to exist at all, regardless of the condemnation of the power of money 'to buy man' which, Lévinas acknowledges, cannot be attenuated.²²⁰ It is with money, in this case the necessity of the entrance into totality, that quantification of man appears, and with it, 'the common measure between men, for which money, whatever be its empirical form, supplies the category'.²²¹ The crucial part within the above quote is the concept of *category*, for it is that which, for Lévinas, brings the third into question. Or, rather, it is *the third* with whom the question of justice arises. And it is what Lévinas refers to as the quantitative quality of economy, measurable by money, which allows conflict to be resolved in a form other than 'vengeance or pardon', orders which are only applicable to the couple (or the *face-to-face*).²²² With justice, the necessary concepts of quantity and reparation arise, provided here, in Lévinas's analysis, by money, and it is in this quantification that the necessity for something akin to a community of singularities arises.

The Other and the Same in *Totality and Infinity*

Subjectivity, in *T.I.*, is formed through a calling into question by an other that cannot be reduced to it, which escapes the cognitive powers of a subject forced to confront absolute difference, *alterity*, and which is then commanded to absolute responsibility. It is for this reason that *T.I.* is subtitled 'An Essay on Exteriority'. Ethics takes place as a putting into question of the ego, of consciousness, or *the same*. Lévinas refers to the self as *the same*, or subjectivity, in order to maintain his insistence on the impossibility of the self being a substance or anything resembling a self-sufficient entity. It is the subject's freedom, according to Lévinas, which is put into question, or his or her 'spontaneity', then limited by the prohibition to murder which the face of the other commands.²²³ What the face of the other poses to subjectivity is the restraint to freedom and spontaneity before cognition, the condition of our very coming into subjectivity.

Due to its unusual construal, it is paramount that the concept of *the face* is understood correctly. The case is not that we ethically evaluate a person appearing to us (a face) subsequently choosing to act freely or unfreely, ethically or unethically. The encounter with the other is encapsulated in the very process of restraint upon our freedom and spontaneity. Lévinas is here

²²⁰ Lévinas, 'E.T.', *op.cit.*, p.45.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, p.45.

²²² *Ibid.*, p.45.

²²³ Lévinas, *T.I.*, *op.cit.*, p. 43.

still part of the tradition of intersubjectivist thinking, descending from post-Kantian idealism, in which the precondition for my self-consciousness, and the experience of an objective world is the ‘recognition’ of the other, the call issuing from the other.²²⁴ This relation to the other which brings into being my own consciousness is not one that pertains to the cognitive realm, but to the practical and moral one.²²⁵ Lévinas importantly adds the prohibition to murder that the face of the other instantiates.

My consciousness, then, though formed through the other, does not return to self to find shame (as in Sartre) as the process of the bringing into being of the self, but is oriented towards the other and the prohibition to kill, annihilate. For Sartre, for instance, the other brings into being the formation of self, of self-consciousness, through such processes as shame and, to follow Lévinas, enacts a full-circle return to self, in which the other is primarily a threat to that very subjectivity.²²⁶ For Lévinas, however, the formation of subjectivity is one that is rooted in the welcoming of the other.

‘Shame’, writes Lévinas, ‘does not have the structure of consciousness and clarity.’²²⁷ It is oriented in the inverse direction. Its subject is exterior to me. (...) Conscience welcomes the other. It is the revelation of a resistance to my powers that does not encounter them as a greater force, but calls in question the naïve right of my powers, my glorious spontaneity as a living being. Morality begins when freedom, instead of being justified by itself, feels itself to be arbitrary and violent.’²²⁸ If the other’s existence is justified, mine is not. ‘His justified existence is the primary fact.’ The self is already, before its inception, guilty of coming into being as ‘usurper and murderer’.²²⁹ Moreover, in my absolute responsibility for the other, I am not

²²⁴ For an interesting discussion on the place of Lévinas and Derrida within the tradition of intersubjectivist thinking, see Peter Dews, *The Idea of Evil*, *op.cit.*, p.165. Also see Simon Glendinning, *On Being with Others* (Simon Glendinning, *On Being with Others*, London and New York: Routledge, 1998).

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.165.

²²⁶ See Hilary Putnam, *Ethics without Ontology* (London: Harvard University Press, 2005), for a convincing study of Lévinas’s figure of the other alongside Sartre’s.

²²⁷ It should be noted here that for Sartre shame does not necessarily have the structure of clarity either, but, unlike Lévinas, he retains the order of consciousness in describing the formation of the self [J.P. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (London: Routledge, 1996)]. The other is also perceived as a threat to subjectivity, deliberately construed as a negative process, where, for Lévinas, in spite of the delimiting of freedom and spontaneity that the other brings about, what ensues is primarily positive: the prohibition to murder.

²²⁸ Lévinas, *T.I.*, *op.cit.*, p.84.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.84.

reciprocated. That, according to Lévinas, is ‘his business’. ‘I am responsible for the other without waiting for reciprocity, even if it should cost me my life’.²³⁰ *O.B.*, as we shall see, conceives of the relationship between self and other in terms of proximity and obsession, instead of height and transcendence. This will be analysed below, together with the figure of the third in the two works. Before turning to the purported ‘leap’ between ethics and politics and how the development of the figure of the third shifts our understanding of it, let us briefly turn to a set of questions and problems which arise from the analysis of the self from Lévinas’s work up to *O.B.*, and including *T.I.*

Problems of the Self

We have seen that the I, for Lévinas, is ipseity, interiority and non-coincidental with itself, and that it is the last assignation (the self’s non-coincidence with itself) which raises the question of the other. In certain constructions, it appears that Lévinas is positing the emergence of the self as separation prior to the entrance of the other. ‘The refusal of a concept [the concept of the *tode ti*] is not only one of the aspects of its being, but its whole content; it is interiority.’²³¹ ‘The ‘I’, he writes, ‘is thus the mode in which the break-up of totality, which *leads* to the presence of the absolutely other, is concretely accomplished.’²³² On a first reading, this looks like a contradictory construction.

A different reading, however, would reveal Lévinas as purposefully construing the admittedly ‘logically absurd structure of *unicity*’²³³ to emphasise the I’s non-coincidence with itself. This is one of the reasons why, throughout *T.I.*, the absolute separation of the self, its ‘solipsism’, its concomitant closedness and openness are stressed. A retrospective reading, from *O.B.* to *T.I.*, might reveal the self as being too solipsistic, too enclosed in itself and separate, too opaque to the other.

However, it is the return to oneself, the suffocating pervasiveness of *ipseity* that incites the escape out of oneself towards the other, through Desire. Additionally and concomitantly, it is the other who facilitates this separateness in the first place, because the I is revealed to have been sufficiently open to the other to allow this, in spite of its enjoyment of the world in

²³⁰ Lévinas, *Ethics and Infinity: Conversations with Philippe Nemo*, trans. Richard A. Cohen (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 2000), pp. 94-5.

²³¹ Lévinas, *T.I.*, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

²³² Lévinas, *T.I.*, *op. cit.*, p. 118, my emphasis.

²³³ Lévinas, *T.I.*, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

interiority. Lévinas is perfectly aware of the logic-defying attributes of the self and other.²³⁴ He writes: 'Needs are in my power. They constitute me as the same and not as dependent on the other.'²³⁵ He then continues: 'having recognized its needs as material needs, as capable of being satisfied, the I can henceforth turn to what it does not lack. It distinguishes the material from the spiritual, opens to Desire',²³⁶ that is, to the Other.

Here, again, we have an almost chronological account of turning towards the other, subsequent to fulfilling of needs. And at this point, one might wonder²³⁷ why the Desire for the Other should arise at all within this self-fulfilled, self-enclosed, self-sufficient world of enjoyment and satisfaction of the I? The answer to this is as important to the conundrum at hand as it is for the wider question of the possibility of the political within Lévinasian ethics, as we shall see, and it is also, in a formulation that is rather traditional in its construal, what, for Lévinas, distinguishes the human from the animal.²³⁸ The Self, Lévinas writes, in a theme he will return to and deepen in *O.B.*, is wrought with insecurity. The claim is not merely that the self is simply unstable in itself; that, as some strands of psychoanalysis and sociology would have it, the 'I' is not content alone. The thesis is not a sociological one about the need for human contact that, apparently, animals lack.²³⁹ He has already made it perfectly clear that the world of enjoyment that the 'I' experiences is one of happiness. Desire for the other is precisely Desire because it transcends need. 'The welcoming of the other', writes Lévinas, 'is peaceable from the first',²⁴⁰ a direct indictment of both Sartre's account of the relation between self and other being marked by conflict²⁴¹ and the Hobbesian 'war of all against all'.²⁴² The reason that the 'I' reaches towards the Other is found in Infinity and Desire, a desire to which it answers and which is 'unquenchable'.²⁴³ 'War itself', Lévinas continues, 'is but a possibility and nowise a condition for it'.²⁴⁴ The condition for the possibility of war against the other, of a battle of subjectivities, is peace.

²³⁴ Lévinas, *T.I.*, *op. cit.*, p. 115, for instance.

²³⁵ Lévinas, *T.I.*, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

²³⁶ Lévinas, *T.I.*, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

²³⁷ Peter Dews makes a similar point in *The Idea of Evil* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), p. 170.

²³⁸ Lévinas, *T.I.*, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

²³⁹ This line of argument is as contentious a justification for the human need for contact as it is for the supposed animal lack of it. I shall return to this problem below.

²⁴⁰ Lévinas, *op. cit.*, *T.I.*, p. 150.

²⁴¹ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes, (London : Routledge, 2003).

²⁴² Thomas Hobbes, *Levinathan*, Flatman, R.E & Johnson (eds.) (London: W.W. Norton, 1997).

²⁴³ Lévinas, *T.I.*, *op. cit.*, p. 150.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

However, here arise two other points: if what Lévinas is providing is a phenomenological account of the other and the 'I', then how is it possible that on occasion, and rather often, one is, indeed, violent towards the other? And, if the face is 'peaceable from the first', questions and undermines my freedom, can the 'I' be held responsible for war and violence? Is war even possible? It seems commonsensical to answer the latter question in the absolute affirmative. It is, after all, in the shadow of the Holocaust that Lévinas writes. As to the former question, the answer, as we shall see, lies in the subject's primary, though not necessarily recognized, i.e. brought to consciousness, responsibility for the other.

The first question can also be posed in the following way: is the 'I' capable of remaining enclosed within its own self? Can it insistently and persistently refuse to answer to the ethical call of the other? Can it blissfully remain unaware or, conversely, purposefully, in self-affirmation, resist the ethical claim? Peter Dews follows this line of enquiry in developing the problem of evil in Lévinas's work, which he analyses as opposed to peace.²⁴⁵ We shall develop the argument as relevant to the question of 'community of singularities', for it is the answer to this question which, to a large extent, determines the following enquiries concerning 'the third' and 'the community'. A parallel analysis is that of the purported gap between ethics and politics, which shall also be developed below. Just as a primary (though not temporally prior) sincerity is necessary for the act of deceit, so peace, instituted in the peaceable welcoming of the face, is necessary for war and violence towards the other. In other words, and again directly writing against Sartre and Husserl's notion of intentionality, Lévinas asserts: 'If the resistance to murder were not ethical but real, we would have a *perception* of it, with all that reverts to the subjective in perception. We would remain within the idealism of a *consciousness* of struggle, and not in relationship with the Other, a relationship that can turn into struggle, but already overflows the consciousness of struggle.'²⁴⁶ It is the Desire towards the Other, in infinity, the ethical welcoming of the face, the breach within subjectivity which allows the other to enter, which determines both the aggression and peaceable reaction to the other in reality. As Lévinas writes,

in this descent [into interiority] a shock must be produced which, without inverting the movement of interiorization, without breaking the thread of the interior substance, would furnish the occasion for a resumption of relations with exteriority. Interiority must be at the same time closed and open.²⁴⁷

Importantly, it seems that here, in *T.I.*, the Other is still constituted as breaching subjectivity from exteriority, forming it and determining it on an ethical level that is as yet not as

²⁴⁵ Dews, *The Idea of Evil*, *op. cit.*

²⁴⁶ Lévinas, *T.I.*, *op. cit.*, p. 199.

²⁴⁷ Lévinas, *T.I.*, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

inescapable as it is presented as being in *O.B.* We shall return to this. In *O.B.*, it seems, at points, as if the Other is construed, in the hyperbolic language Lévinas uses in his descriptions, as defining the self to a level that almost becomes equivalent to the ‘*il y a*’ in *O.E.* and earlier works. The question then arises whether this, along with the eschatological presentation of peace, and with it, the actual community, leave the ethical promise on a perpetually postponed level.

‘It is as though persecution by another were at the bottom of solidarity with another.’²⁴⁸ Philippe Nemo²⁴⁹ and Peter Dews interpret this to be negative because: a) it does not explain the provenance of evil, it seems to originate in the other and b) there is a dissolving of distinction between moral and physical evil (encouraged by the ambiguousness of the term ‘*le mal*’ in French).²⁵⁰ This worry could be answered in a couple of ways. Firstly, I contend that there is no dissolving, but a purposeful collapsing of the categories of the ethical and the political, the Other and the Same, categories which had, at least in terms of logic, been previously strictly delineated. Solidarity becomes (the third, and, implicitly, universality, all others in the eyes of the Other) always already there. Therefore, solidarity with another, persecution by the other are at the basis of subjectivity. Secondly, the very ‘dissolving’ Dews refers to, could be said, in a certain way, to ‘guarantee’ a solidarity, and perhaps constitute Lévinas’s idea of a ‘necessary reassurance’ of the kind Dews believes Kant to be issuing when developing the ‘Kingdom of Ends’,²⁵¹ a moral ‘incentive’.

Fraternity and Primary Sociality

Lévinas’s thought has largely been interpreted to have little to offer to a political account of the emergence and situation of the self. A ‘gap’ thus emerged between what even the most faithful and sophisticated of Lévinas’s interpreters took to be the priority allocated to the concept of ethics and the marginal locus reserved for the political. Crucial to the perceived ‘gap’ have been Lévinas’s descriptions of the encounter between self and other, and the third, respectively. That is, decisive as to whether a ‘gap’ even exists is Lévinas’s apparent indecision as to how to relate the third party to the face-to-face relation, or how the face-to-face, as an apparently primordial event, relates to language, society and politics. If, at points, the self-other dyad seems primordial

²⁴⁸ Lévinas, *op. cit.*, *O.B.*, p. 103.

²⁴⁹ Philippe Nemo, *Job and the Excess of Evil*, trans. Michael Kigel (Pittsburg: Duquesne University Press, 1998), p. 196.

²⁵⁰ Dews, *op. cit.*, p. 181.

²⁵¹ Immanuel Kant, *To Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch*, trans. Ted Humphrey (Indianapolis: Hackett Publications, 2003).

to the joining of the third person, later, the third is shown to have always been there, looking at me in the eyes of the other. In *O.B.*, for instance, the third party is described, on one occasion, as appearing on the scene after the self-other dyad is already in place.

If proximity ordered to me only the other alone, there would have not been any problem in even the most general sense of the term. A question would not have been born, nor consciousness, nor self- consciousness. The responsibility for the other is an immediacy antecedent to questions, it is proximity. It is troubled and becomes a problem when the third party enters.²⁵²

Here, it looks as if there could be no third party until the relation to the other was already set. Anticipating that his readers might deduce that the entrance into society which the third brings to the dyad might also involve a diminution or attenuation of the ethical relation, Lévinas quickly adds: ‘In no way is justice (...) a degeneration that would be produced in the measure that for empirical reasons the initial duo would become a trio.’²⁵³ *T.I.* also seems to invite confusion, at different stages, as to how the third is related to the dyad. Much of the descriptions of the self-other relation are presented in gendered and familial language. Outlining how the erotic relation invites interruption in the name of justice, Lévinas eventually introduces the theme of fraternity to describe the relationship between the face-to-face and the world as totality- the world as thought, language, judgement, politics, justice and their necessity. The main motivation for using the metaphors of fraternity and parenthood is that in these concepts, the unicity of the I and the absolute difference and distance between self and other are exemplified. The son, for instance, is both ‘elected’ by the father and becomes a unique ‘I’; the child is both unique and not unique, it is both part of the self and separate. Fraternity then provides the alternative to the traditional concept of community or society, which, as we saw earlier, is not sufficiently separating, nor binding enough. Finally, fecundity leads to the family, the family to the larger society and, for Lévinas, universality. The ‘I’ exists at the same time as unique in the world and as brother among brothers. As Lévinas writes:

I am I and chosen one but where can I be chosen, if not from among other chosen ones, from among equals? (...) The human is posited in fraternity: that all men are brothers is not added to man as a moral conquest, but constitutes his ipseity [i.e. his selfhood]...The relation with the face in fraternity, where in his turn the Other appears in solidarity with all the others, constitutes the social order, the reference of every dialogue to the third

²⁵² Lévinas, *O.B.*, op.cit., p.157.

²⁵³ Ibid., p.159.

party by which the We... encompasses the face to face opposition, opens the erotic upon a social life....²⁵⁴

The Always Already of Solidarity

What is important to stress in this complex quote is that selfhood and its relationship to the We, which he capitalizes, is not posited as a narrative, is not described as a temporal process whereby selfhood and being with others is a moral choice. Solidarity with one another is always already there. In the welcoming of the face, which approaches me from a *height*, from within *exteriority* and which commands me and dominates me, equality is established.²⁵⁵ This is produced through fraternity, for it is through my non-coincidence with myself, being alongside other singularities, non-coincidental with themselves, that society, and the We are established.

The reason fraternity becomes such an important metaphor is precisely because it holds in tension the relation between singularities and their being together. And this, it should be stressed, stands in direct opposition to traditional conceptions of the self based on resemblance. 'Human fraternity', writes Lévinas, 'has (...) two aspects: it involves individualities whose logical status is not reducible to the status of ultimate differences in a genus, for their singularity consists in each referring to itself.'²⁵⁶ The reason paternity is here so central is because what lends to this conception of being with others, in the world, is the unifying factor of a common father. 'Society must be a fraternal community', Lévinas writes, 'to be commensurate with the straightforwardness, the primary proximity, in which the face presents itself to my welcome.'²⁵⁷

Human Community is a Monotheism

Human community, for Lévinas, as is outlined in *T.I.*, is a monotheism due to the above factors. This is, he claims, not a religious notion, but an import of the structure of being together that monotheism offers, a being together marked by difference, removedness and height on the one hand, and proximity and intimacy on the other. It is language, in *T. I.*, which stands at the basis of solidarity with one another. This, in itself, is not a new thesis, except Lévinas's claim, to be developed further in *O.B.*, is that there is always a Saying which escapes the Said, there is always that which escapes language and a sought intimacy with the other. Here, we have a number of similarities between more traditional philosophical projects, including

²⁵⁴ Lévinas, *T.I.*, *op.cit.*, pp.279-80.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.214.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.214.

²⁵⁷ Lévinas, *T.I.*, *op.cit.*, p.214.

Wittgenstein's, and Lévinas's.²⁵⁸ There are distinctive similarities, for instance, between the Lévinasian face to face and the Wittgensteinian project of pointing to the limits of language, or nonsense [*Unsinn*],²⁵⁹ to that which cannot be expressed or spoken of through language, but which can, nevertheless, be pointed to, or called attention to, recall, as well as other concepts which designate a beyond.

Concepts such as *the face to face*, *illeity* and others are described in quasi-phenomenological style as pointing to an outside of the totality, a locus of meaning and value that is within neither temporal, nor spatial dimensions. It is a transcendent which nonetheless is not mystical. As stated above, Lévinas makes use of a plethora of hyperbolic and philosophically laden terms to point to this 'beyond' or 'otherwise' of the totality, of which not a few are derived directly from religious language: 'holy', 'saintly', 'pious', 'glory', 'obsession', 'trauma', 'accusation', 'persecution', 'hostage', etc.. This is akin to the Wittgensteinian project, for instance, in that both aim to point to a beyond. However, Lévinas's hyperbolic strategy of showing this, or pointing to this beyond, is very distinctive indeed from Wittgenstein's, whose interest lies in the mode in which logic reveals something about the limits of language and points to something that lies beyond it, while being unable, by its very nature, to express what they are.²⁶⁰

Lévinas's Beyond

Various commentators have attempted to mark this beyond as simply being the transcendental of every other philosophy posing the possibility of the existence of an 'other realm', equating, in one sweeping move, god with *the other* and merging Lévinas's philosophical project with his religious writings. The beyond of Lévinas, while maintaining features of the transcendental, is nevertheless very much embedded, grounded in our experience and lives, and, even though called transcendent and lying on the *hither* side of space and time (i.e. not marked by the categories of space and time) is not located outside of the realm of ordinary experience. Lévinas's writing, and the terms he uses to designate the beyond, be they *face*, *illeity*, or *the other*, might more accurately be referred to as pointing to a *dimension* of our experience, obscured from view by traditional (and by this, Lévinas means, in Heideggerian vein, scientific, or what they both take to be traditionally phenomenological) ways of thinking. Another way of putting this is to say that Lévinas wants to point to an 'unsuspected horizon' of human

²⁵⁸ Other comparisons include John McDowell, Donald Davidson, Stanley Cavell, Cora Diamond and Charles Taylor. See Glendinning, Simon, *Being with Others* (London: Routledge, 1998).

²⁵⁹ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-philosophicus*, trans. D.F. Pears and B.F. McGuinness (London: Routledge, 1993).

²⁶⁰ Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-philosophicus*, *op.cit.*

experience.²⁶¹ The face ‘calls to me above and beyond the given that speech puts in common among us.’²⁶²

It is in the section entitled ‘The Other and the Others’, that Lévinas most strikingly addresses the misunderstanding stated earlier, that the third might arrive later on the scene, in a temporal narrative preceded by the relationship between self and other. For language, everything that takes place between the self and other, concerns everyone. Language, as the presence of the face, refuses what Lévinas calls the clandestinity of love, ‘where justice has no place’²⁶³ and, as he puts it, ‘the one and the other are forgetful of the universe and language turns into cooing and laughter.’²⁶⁴ Why Lévinas needs to move from the erotic to fraternity and with it, society and politics, has been analysed above, in section I, ‘The Ego and the Totality’. For our purposes, what needs emphasising is that *T.I.*, too, allocates a necessary place to justice, the political and the third. Probably the clearest place where the necessity of the third being located within the dyad of self and other and not coming to it from exteriority is the following: ‘The third party looks at me in the eyes of the Other - language is justice. It is not that there first would be the face, and then the being it manifests or expresses would concern himself with justice; the epiphany of the face qua face opens humanity.’²⁶⁵ Importantly, it is also here that Lévinas proceeds to describe the We, community, in terms of a ‘command that commands commanding’.²⁶⁶ ‘The presence of the face’, writes Lévinas, ‘the infinity of the other, is a destituteness, a presence of the third party (that is, of the whole of humanity which look at us) and a command that commands commanding.’²⁶⁷

At first glance, this is a paradoxical phrase. Unless, that is, one recalls Lévinas’s account of the face-to-face and the welcoming response that the face of the other invites and commands. It is the work of being together which is being commanded in immediacy, as soon as the face of the other commands me, faces me. Importantly, and unlike *O.B.*, *T.I.* still retains traces of the development of the self-other relationship as equality, a theme developed earlier in Lévinas’s philosophical career (‘E.T.’). In being commanded by the other, his mastery over me is stressed just as much as my equality with him. It is in this command that the work of being together

²⁶¹ Lévinas, ‘Signature’, in *Difficult Freedom*, trans. Seán Hand (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), p.243.

²⁶² Lévinas, *T.I.*, *op.cit.*, p.212.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, p.212.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p.213.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

resides: I am commanded by the other to serve with him or her. And it is only inasmuch as I am master myself that I can be commanded.²⁶⁸ A fresh look at the above quote reveals Lévinas's intentions as even clearer if the personal pronoun 'we' is carefully taken into account. For it is not me that the whole of humanity looks at, but us. This is what Lévinas calls the primary sociality in *T.I.*: a solidarity which is always already there as soon as there is a third. If distance defines my relationship with the other, it is through the third that I am with all others. 'Thou shall not kill' which the other commands me, is not merely the putting in question of my freedom, of my spontaneity, but also immediately and concomitantly reveals with it the whole of humanity, in the eyes of the third looking at me through the eyes of the other. And through the third, it is the whole of humanity which confronts me and commands me to respond. The passage from ethics is immanent as soon as the erotic relationship is corrected of its injustice.

On Lévinas's account, the duality of the couple within the erotic relationship allows for no consideration of justice. Violence can be forgiven, for there is only *one* other to whom harm has been done. As soon as there is another, in *O.B.*, and as long as the couple of self and other is not one defined by the erotic, justice becomes a consideration. There is a necessity in the passage from ethics to politics, grounded in the 'aspiration' of the face-to-face to a 'we', to 'a state, institutions, laws, which are the sources of universality. Primary sociality is to be found in the rigor of justice which judges me, and not in love that excuses me.'²⁶⁹ There are further considerations to be undertaken here, as, for instance, the question of whether Lévinas is already criticizing the face-to-face as too consuming a relationship, yet his stress falls not on this, but rather on the interruption of ethics, encapsulated in the face-to-face, by the political. In interrupting politics, the face to face acts as a corrective to the intrinsic violence of the state and its irremediable tendency towards homogenization, or *totality*, in Lévinas's terms. Due to space constraints, the concept of totality will not be analysed at this stage. As stated earlier, we shall not be closely engaging with the concept of totality.

For our present purposes, suffice it to say that in general, throughout Lévinas's work, and especially in *T.I.*, ethics is associated with the infinite, height, transcendence, etc., while for politics Lévinas provides a string of terms which are meant to stand in association with totality: state, violence, institutions, laws, equality, calculability and symmetry. In a phrase famous for its clarity and striking claims, Lévinas writes: 'Politics left to itself bears a tyranny within itself; it deforms the I and other who have given rise to it, for it judges them according to universal rules, and thus in absentia.'²⁷⁰ A community based on a common genus would not be binding,

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Lévinas, *T.I.*, *op.cit.*, p. 304.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 300.

nor separate the individualities within it enough. As was shown earlier, in the analysis of 'E.T.', the idea of a totality not being separating nor binding enough was already being elaborated by Lévinas before the publication of any of his major works (*T.I.* and *O.B.*).²⁷¹ Alternatively, fraternity and primary sociality give rise to a community of individualities, or singularities 'whose logical status is not reducible to the status of ultimate differences in a genus, for their singularity consists in each referring to itself.'²⁷² And, just as there is a necessity for ethics to interrupt politics, there is a necessary interruption of ethics by politics, for, as we have seen, left to itself, the relationship between self and other, and especially the erotic relationship between self and other, is marked by violence.

²⁷¹ Ibid., p. 29.

²⁷² Ibid., p. 214.

Otherwise than Being and the Third

Having seen how *T.I.* conceptualises the relationship between the face to face and the third, let us set out how, in *O.B.*, the relationship with *alterity* mutates from one of height and transcendence to one of proximity to the point of substitution, obsession and persecution by the other. The full impact of the transition from height and difference to proximity, substitution and obsession will be revealed in the analysis of Lévinas's redefinition of subjectivity as other-within-the-self and his construal of solidarity and, implicitly, community, as 'persecution by the other'.²⁷³

There is a strong continuity between Lévinas's two major works, in his development of the figure of the third and the 'passage' from ethics to politics. If, in *T.I.*, the third interrupts the duality of the face-to-face based on height and transcendence, in *O. B.*, the third is also introduced through the other and interrupts the duality of the couple. The other, however, is here revealed to be the self's persecutor, in proximity. In other words, if distance and height defines the self-other relationship in *T.I.*, proximity, obsession with the other, passivity and persecution by the other define the face-to-face in *O.B.*

O.B. emphatically shifts the focus of analysis from exteriority to interiority, with its various modalities - substitution, recurrence, persecution, obsession, maternity, expiation – and evinces a subjectivity impossible to define through reference to itself alone.

Substitution

Analyses concerning the development of subjectivity in *O.B.* as distinct from *T.I.*, as well as those discussing the shifts in treatment of the notion of the third between Lévinas's two major works delve straight into the specific sections where he deals with the third: 'From the Saying to the Said and the Wisdom of desire'²⁷⁴ in *O.B.*, and 'The Other and the Others'²⁷⁵ in *T.I.* However, for reasons which shall become clear later, I shall begin with the 'core' of *O.B.*, the essay entitled 'Substitution'. This is also methodologically grounded in the belief that the question of the purpose of this essay within *O.B.* and its placement at the centre of that work is sufficiently difficult to discern, that unless one adequately addresses it, it would be impossible

²⁷³ Lévinas, *O.B.*, *op.cit.*, p. 15, *passim*.

²⁷⁴ Lévinas, *O.B.*, p. 153 ff.

²⁷⁵ Lévinas, *T.I.*, p. 212 ff.

to situate *T.I.* and *O.B.* in relation to each other.²⁷⁶ Moreover, the motivation for starting with ‘Substitution’ also seems supported by Lévinas’s own claims that it represents the ‘centrepiece’²⁷⁷ of *O.B.*, and the ‘germ of the book’.²⁷⁸ Lévinas’s enigmatic essay, ‘Substitution’ is also the locus of the most radical development of the notion of *passivity* as defining subjectivity.

The precise reason for this essay’s centrality within *O.B.*, as well as within Lévinas’s *œuvre*, is contested. Various interpretations have been suggested. Amongst those is Simon Critchley’s contention in *Ethics, Politics, Subjectivity*,²⁷⁹ that what Lévinas is doing is conducting an enquiry into the conditions for the possibility of ethics, or what kind of subjectivity would serve as the kernel of ethics, if ethics is ‘a movement of desire that tends towards the other and that cannot be reduced to a need that returns to self’.²⁸⁰ According to this reading, Lévinas would be offering a transcendental or a quasi-transcendental answer to the conditions for the possibility of ethics, to which the answer would be a subjectivity based on a for-the-other at the heart of subjectivity and not a for-itself.²⁸¹ I will, however, be focusing on Lévinas’s treatment of subjectivity within the piece and asking what purpose the radical development of subjectivity as substitution serves within *O.B.*

In answering this question, I shall be starting from Robert Bernasconi’s claim that what Lévinas is effecting, with ‘Substitution’, is not merely positing a different kind of subjectivity as the basis for ethics and inquiring into ‘the conditions of possibility for sacrifice’²⁸² (the transcendental reading), but that he is also, in a typical gesture of a double bind, to borrow Derrida’s phrase, asking about the meaning of concrete experience.²⁸³ It is my contention that *O.B.* manifests the same ambiguity which underscores Lévinas’s analysis of the self-other

²⁷⁶ See Robert Bernasconi, ‘What is the question to which “substitution” is the answer?’ in Robert Bernasconi and Simon Critchley, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Lévinas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) for an in-depth analysis of the questions to which ‘Substitution’ might be the answer to. Bernasconi focuses on the earlier version of Lévinas’s essay for an elucidation of the answer to the question that ‘Substitution’ poses. See Emmanuel Lévinas, ‘Substitution’, in *Basic Philosophical Writings* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996).

²⁷⁷ Lévinas, *O.B.*, *op.cit.*, p. 193.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, xli.

²⁷⁹ Simon Critchley, *Ethics, Politics, Subjectivity* (London and New York: Verso, 1999).

²⁸⁰ Critchley, *Ethics, Politics, Subjectivity*, *op. cit.*, p. 65. Simon Critchley also concludes that, for Lévinas, ethics is ethics for the sake of politics, a claim I shall be later contesting.

²⁸¹ Bernasconi, ‘What is the Question to which ‘substitution’ is the answer?’, *op. cit.*, p.235.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 250.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*

relation in *T.I.*: that of the double-tiered quasi-transcendental and concrete/empirical grounding of the relation between the self and other. I shall be advancing the further claim that as far as the quasi-transcendental element of the work is concerned, Lévinas is not only posing a one-for-the-other at the heart of subjectivity, but a *one-for-the-other-within*. The concept of the *one-for-the-other-within* is further complicated by the analysis which follows this section, of 'From the Saying to the Said and the Wisdom of Desire', in which the third is shown to always have been there in the eyes of the other.²⁸⁴

It therefore looks as if what Lévinas is posing is a one-for-the-third-within-the-other-within. The Other has been set up as the destabilising force at the heart of subjectivity, within the self, preventing the self-referentiality of a satisfied ego. In the same way, the third is now set up as the interruptive element within the self-other relation, which, prior to the 'entrance' of the third, prior to the there being a question,²⁸⁵ runs the risk of settling into a self-enclosed, self-sufficient relation, akin to the riveting of the self to itself, in the enjoyment of the modalities of existence, of sensibility that Lévinas describes in *O.E.*, for instance. Put differently, it is the third which perpetually prevents this binding from ever taking place, just as the other within me disrupts the possibility of the self's being bound to itself. If the logic and temporal order above look contradictory, it is because, in a further formal move mirroring the disruptive force of the Other in the earlier argument, time and formal logic are subjected to the same kind of destabilising treatment as subjectivity and, later, the relation between the self and Other.

In a certain sense, and in keeping with Robert Bernasconi's reading of the importance of *concreteness* in Lévinas's work, the disruption, the *interruption*, has already taken place. The figure of the Other, the 'me' and the third are in a perpetually disruptive and displacing movement whereby no relation, either between the 'me' and the Other, the Other and the third, or the 'me' and the third, is ever at rest. Mirroring the complex arguments employed to ensure that the self was never the figure at peace with itself of what Lévinas takes to be the Western metaphysical tradition, the 'me', the Other and the third are shown to always already be locked into a logic of supplementarity whereby each is the supplement and none is the Same. At the same time as this logic of interruption underlies the conditions for the possibility of ethics, it also underlies the conditions for the possibility of politics. The same necessity marking the construal of subjectivity as *the-other-within* is mirrored in the third being in the eyes of the Other.

²⁸⁴ Lévinas, *O.B.*, *op.cit.*, p. 153 ff.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 153, *passim*.

The difficulty arising out of any attempt to clarify or understand the text is one underscored by Lévinas's development of his theory of language within *O.B.*, culminating in the section entitled 'From the Saying to the Said and the Wisdom of Desire', a text we will come back to in the analysis of the 'third'.²⁸⁶ The difference between the Saying and the Said lends the text the quality of an impenetrable surface as far as thematisation is concerned. This is, not least, woven around a host of other Lévinasian anxieties concerning the reception or inheritance of the text, a theme Derrida takes up in 'Adieu'.²⁸⁷

The torturous torsions of the text bear testimony to Lévinas's concern that his descriptions of subjectivity as passivity in the essay may not be passive enough.²⁸⁸ Such is the anxiety associated with the possibility of activity surfacing as having underlined the notion of passivity all along, that Lévinas resorts to language on the 'hither side' of philosophical discourse to describe the other-within-the-self that subjectivity is. This is, of course, not a stylistic ruse, but grounded in the belief that Western philosophical discourse, as rooted in rationality, knowledge of its object, and, as far as Husserlian phenomenology is concerned, a bringing to light of the object of analysis to consciousness, is inadequate in dealing with the other and subjectivity as developed in *O.B.*. A philosophy concerned with the primacy of the ego over the other, at the core of which rests a self-assured, free, autonomous subject is one ill - equipped to adequately respond to the ethical exigencies the figure of the other impose upon the self.

Not 'Doing Away' with the Self

One of the common critiques levelled against Lévinas's account of subjectivity as passivity and persecution is that his analysis 'does away' with the very possibility for action. Since *O.B.* is a relentless attack on the notion of the subject conceived as freedom, spontaneity and volition, the worry is that an account of the self based on such metaphors as 'suffocation' and 'being-hostage' does away with the very possibility for ethical action. However, the elision of subjectivity is an unjustified worry if Lévinas's theory of substitution is understood correctly. Its force as an account of subjectivity lies precisely in the concreteness of the ethical experience. Transcendence, for Lévinas, is nothing if not lived. It is precisely because the subject is a being who lives from its environment and has the capacity to enjoy the world that putting oneself in

²⁸⁶ Lévinas's distinction between 'the Saying and the Said' and his setting it up such that it underpins his whole project in *O.B.*, resists attempts to describe it as a theory. However, for the sake of clarity, I shall be referring to it as such.

²⁸⁷ Jacques Derrida, *Adieu to Emmanuel Lévinas*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1997).

²⁸⁸ Lévinas, *O.B.*, *op. cit.*, p. 113.

place of another makes sense at all. This is another instance of Lévinas's encounter with Heidegger and his critique of what he perceives as an abstract Dasein, who is 'never hungry'.²⁸⁹ A self-determining being, who does not know the meaning of hunger and the resulting deprivation of giving one's food away, could never effectively be capable of ethical action.

The insistence on absolute passivity and responsibility, the obsession with the other definitional of the subject in *O.B.* are tropes construed as responses to the above challenge. They also constitute a significant shift from 'The Ego and the Totality' and Lévinas's development of the concept of *disinterest*. One of the challenges which arose out of the development of the self's obsession with the other in *T.I.* was that it looked as if the relation of obsession between the self and the other was based on the encounter occurring on the practical/empirical level first and foremost. If *T.I.* outlined the relationship between self and other as one based on exteriority, *O.B.* shifts the focus onto interiority. Lévinas's rewriting of the concept of self as always already obsessed with the other, if it is a self at all, bypasses this problem and 'ensures' that the question of a freely-electing self, who might or might not decide to approach the other ethically does not even arise. Another corollary of the relationship between the self and other being defined by obsession, trauma, persecution, passivity and accusation is that the concept of self emerges as a rewritten *singularity*, as not even corresponding to itself, as we saw in the Introduction. The kernel of the argument in 'Substitution' is the concept of the *other-within-the-self* as it is developed in *O.B.* For, it is precisely due to the shift in the development of the figure of the Other as interiority as opposed to exteriority (as in *T.I.*), that singularity does not correspond with itself.

Though crucial to an understanding of the development of subjectivity within *O.B.*, as well as how subjectivity sits in relation to the other in this later work, Lévinas's references to the *other-within-the-self* (or, more appropriately, *the other-within-me*) are cursory. The statements concerning *the-other-within-me* are presented as conclusions or obvious corollaries of the argument. Of course, the manner in which the other within the self is *revealed* to always have been there, a conclusion that is at once posterior and anterior to the argument concerning the development of subjectivity and the answer to the question of 'who' the subject is, defies the redefinition of traditional time and logic.²⁹⁰ Throughout *O.B.*, and to some extent, Lévinas's earlier writings, formal logic, as much as time are submitted to the most stringent modifications and ultimately altered to the extent that the question of whether they are to go by the same name

²⁸⁹ Lévinas, *T.I.*, *op.cit.*, p.134.

²⁹⁰ See, e.g., Lévinas's redefinition of time as based on the relationship to the Other in *Time and the Other and Additional Essays*, trans. Richard Cohen, (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1987).

arises.²⁹¹ This is, again, not a stylistic ruse of Lévinas's 'ludic' writing, but a corollary of the relation between self and other, which, aside from rewriting the whole concept of the 'ego', subjects even such categories as time and logic to distortion.

Perhaps in a manner which could be seen as a response to what Lévinas took to be Derrida's critique of *T.I.* concerning the order in the presentation of the other the figure of the *other-within-me* is at once always already there, whilst never having been there at all, and there 'in the end', as it were, in the evincing of subjectivity as interiority. Following the publication of Derrida's influential essay 'Violence and Metaphysics', Lévinas allegedly misunderstood Derrida to have been criticising him for attempting to 'say' the 'unsayable' other, or, as Robert Bernasconi puts it, to have implied that 'transcendence as he [Lévinas] present[s] it (...) is impossible, because it is unthinkable'.²⁹²

The notion of the other in the same, one of the defining conceptual moments of *O.B.*, is as much a response to and modification of Lévinas's earlier analysis of the relation between self and other as exteriority in *T.I.*, as it is a more general continuation of Lévinas's ongoing engagement with the Western philosophical tradition, notably Husserl, Hegel and Heidegger. His main reference and ally in the confrontation with the above philosophers, whom he sees, on a very general level, to ultimately be subsuming the Other to the self, is Plato and his notion of *psychē*,²⁹³ which is what Lévinas employs to designate the *other within the self*.²⁹⁴

The relationship between Lévinas and Plato's philosophies is complex and beyond the scope of the present analysis.²⁹⁵ For our purposes, the crucial element to emphasise is that *psychism* represents the 'principle of life' in Greek philosophy before Plato²⁹⁶ and that Lévinas employs it throughout *T.I.* to designate 'inner life'²⁹⁷ and in *O.B.*, with a shift in emphasis, to signify the

²⁹¹ The question of the name and signature is famously taken up by Derrida. We shall return to naming in Chapter Three.

²⁹² Robert Bernasconi, in *The Cambridge Companion to Lévinas*, *op.cit.*, p. 250.

²⁹³ I shall be following Tanja Staehler's translation of Lévinas's 'psychisme' as 'psychism', which provides a continuation with Lingis's own translation in *T.I.* of the same term, rather than his later rendering of it as 'psyche' in *O.B.*

²⁹⁴ The concept of the *Other within the self* could be read as alluding to Plato's 'Good beyond being', thereby accentuating the essential aspect of that which constitutes subjectivity, as well as the self's tendency to 'tend' towards the other, whether in exteriority or interiority. See Tanja Staehler, *Plato and Lévinas: The Ambiguous Out-Side of Ethics* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2009).

²⁹⁵ See Tanja Staehler, *Plato and Lévinas* for the relationship between Lévinas and Plato's works, and a situation of Lévinas's concept of the *other-in-the-same* within the phenomenological tradition.

²⁹⁶ See Lévinas, *O.B.*, *op.cit.*, pp.71/88 f.

²⁹⁷ Lévinas, *T.I.*, *op.cit.*, pp.54/ 24 f.

other within me, who is there from the beginning. It is important to note, at this point, that, as with most of Lévinas's terms, the meaning of *psychism* mutates in his work, such that it does not contrast with the physical,²⁹⁸ but already encompasses corporeality. Also crucial is Lévinas's choice of order in which he treats these themes. As stated above, his work in general represents a challenge to temporality and traditional logic, in that it invites the reader to think his concepts outside the bounds of the terminological and conceptual constraints of Western philosophy, utilising linguistic 'tools' not available to the tradition he is writing within. Hence, in this instance, interiority, designated by *psychism* is not opposed to exteriority, but is situated on the other side of it. The systematic treatment of interiority before exteriority in *T.I.* led to erroneous interpretations of his work, whereby he was taken to be presenting a temporal order of a 'before' and 'after' the encounter with the Other, namely an interiority devoid of exteriority, which is brought by the encounter with the Other, followed by the move of the self, grounded in desire, towards the Other and within exteriority (implying taking leave of interiority).²⁹⁹

Related to this misunderstanding is the perception that the encounter with the Other was one primarily grounded in the empirical. In the present context, however, the presentation, in *O.B.*, of the *other within the self* as always already there, and the shift in the description of the relationship between self and other from 'exteriority' (the movement of the self towards the Other in desire) to 'interiority' (*the other within the same*) presents further difficulties related to the same rewriting of traditional philosophical concepts. In *O.B.*, *psychē* designates the host of modalities Lévinas employs to describe the relation between the self and the Other. It is obsession, trauma, substitution and suffering.³⁰⁰ As stated above, the references to *psychism* and the other within the self are peppered throughout *O.B.*

The first, and the clearest, reference to the *other within the same* in *O.B.* is in Chapter Two, 'Intentionality and Sensing', within the section entitled 'Questioning and Allegiance to the Other', and is employed to designate the very definition of subjectivity. Perhaps revealingly, Lévinas's first references to the other in the same occur within a section which directly takes up/problematises the question of 'the question', the call of the Other upon me, or the demand that the Other places upon me. It is the call of the Other which Lévinas is preoccupied with presenting in a non-linear fashion, as already having occurred, so as to leave no doubt as to the conditions for the possibility of answering the call of the other, something that, as previously stated, the temporal, systematic presentation of the analysis in *T.I.* had invited

²⁹⁸ Tanja Staehler, *Plato and Lévinas*, *op. cit.*, p.36.

²⁹⁹ See Tanja Staehler *Plato and Lévinas*, *op. cit.*, for an analysis of the relationship between interiority and exteriority in Lévinas, in the context of an engagement with Plato's 'Gyges'.

³⁰⁰ Lévinas, *O.B.*, *op. cit.*, pp. 69, 191, n. 3.

misunderstandings about. If the other is *within me*, the question will already have been posed - and answered - before an actual call from the other can be responded to or, indeed, ignored or denied. Thus, Lévinas writes: 'There is an intrigue of the other in the same which does not amount to an openness of the other to the same. (...) Subjectivity is structured as the other in the same, but in a way different from that of consciousness'.³⁰¹

The key to elucidating Lévinas's references to the presentation of the question to me is, again, his 'theory' of time, which is, of course, not a theory systematically understood. The other within the same seems to be developed as a concept such that it would constitute a direct answer to and refutation of Heidegger's question of Being. It is not a coincidence that Lévinas starts the chapter with the question about 'the question' and what it is that the philosopher seeks to disclose with the question 'what is Being', that is Being, and 'Truth'. If Being, for Heidegger, is the fundamental question, and the question who has primacy over the question of what, Lévinas undercuts both with an oblique reference to the nudity and exposure with which the Other presents himself or herself to me, before proceeding to name it the other in the same. 'here is a problem preliminary to the questions "who?" and "what?"', he writes : 'Why is there a question in exhibition?'³⁰² 'How is it that the "what?", already steeped in being so as to open it up the more, becomes a demand and a prayer, a special language inserting into the "communication" of the given an appeal for help, for aid addressed to another?'³⁰³ Prior to the question and the disclosure of Being to subjectivity is, therefore, the 'question of the question'. Before the "what?" and the "who?" is the even more primordial 'how', designating the ethical modality through which the other presents himself to me. If, for Heidegger, the 'who' undercut the question of the 'what', for Lévinas, 'how' undercuts the Heideggerian question of the 'who'.

The manifestation of Being'[...] is indeed the primary event, but *the very primacy of the primary is in the presence of the present*. A past more ancient than the present, a past which was never present and whose anarchical antiquity was never given in the play of dissimulations and manifestations, a past whose *other* signification remains to be described, signifies over and beyond the manifestation of being, which thus would convey but a moment of this signifying signification.³⁰⁴

One could suspect, Lévinas continues, that there might be an 'interval' between question and response in the temporal order of the presentation to me of this question of the question. Yet,

³⁰¹ Lévinas, *O.B.*, *op.cit.*, p.25.

³⁰² Lévinas, *O.B.*, *op.cit.*, p.24.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, p.24.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p.24.

since it is subject to the diachrony of time, the question is, of course, ‘predated’ by an even more ancient answer to the call of the other.

Lévinas is keen, here, to stress not only the *an-archic* situation of the response to the other in regard to the question of Being, but also, crucially, the interiority of this call of the other which has already been answered. Were he to have left it here, the analysis would resemble something very similar to the account given in *T.I.* about the relationship between the self and other being grounded in exteriority and the ‘call of the other’, more primordial than the call of Being. However, the significant shift occurring in *O.B.* is as stated above, the focus on interiority and the other in the same. For this interiority, this other within the same, *is* subjectivity. Subjectivity is structured as the other in the same, but in a way different from that of consciousness. The other within the same is *disturbance* in the strongest sense of the term: a torturous, disequilibrating supplementarity-which-is-nonetheless-the-very-core of the matter, at the heart of subjectivity.³⁰⁵ This melding, this bonding of the self to the other, what Lévinas calls ‘allegiance’ is the responsibility of the same for the other, a responsibility or rather *responsivity* present before any ‘present’, in actuality.³⁰⁶

Lévinas is keen, in this section, as he is throughout his works, to differentiate between his account of the other in the same and other, psychoanalytically-informed analyses presenting alterity as internalization,³⁰⁷ or the Hegelian and Sartrean developments of consciousness as developing through the encounter with the other encountered phenomenologically.

The way subjectivity is structured as the other in the same differs from that of consciousness, which is consciousness of being, however indirect, tenuous and inconsistent this relationship between consciousness and its theme “placed” before it

³⁰⁵ I am here alluding, as is Lévinas, it seems, to Sartre’s famous formulation of ‘Nothingness lies coiled at the heart of being- like a worm.’ (Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, *op.cit.*, p.21), an account Lévinas’s own stands in opposition to.

³⁰⁶ Lévinas, *O.B.*, *op.cit.*, p.25.

³⁰⁷ Though there are important differences between the accounts of the self-other relation within the tradition of psychoanalysis, it is a commonly accepted view that the other is generally represented as either actual (‘encountered’ on what might be called the ontical level, as derived from the phenomenological tradition) or as internalised. Contemporary Freudian and Lacanian theories providing an account of alterity, such as Julia Kristeva’s or Luce Irigaray’s, conceive of the other as an internalised figure. The notion of an internalised other is something Lévinas is highly critical of, given that these theories would ultimately amount to an obliteration of alterity through the integration of otherness within consciousness. These accounts, as are those of their forerunners, whose theories Lévinas is locked in a confrontation with throughout his works (Husserl and Heidegger), present alterity as too accessible to consciousness for Lévinas, in spite of the concerted effort of these theorists to preserve it.

may be (...) a figuration of an image, (...) a divination incapable of objectification, but aspiring to objectification and thus a consciousness- and thus consciousness of being.³⁰⁸

All accounts conceiving of the other as accessible to consciousness, such as Husserl's and Sartre's, for instance, both of whom Lévinas seems to be alluding to in this section, amount to totalisation and the eventual incorporation of otherness into the same/subordination of otherness to the self.

Lévinas then moves from the metaphysical level describing the structure of the *other within the same* (which is not that of consciousness) to the ontological level of the encounter with the other, to ensure there is no misunderstanding about the asymmetry which characterises this notion.³⁰⁹ Since he is here discussing language, in relation to the question, he stresses the importance of the non-reciprocal character of the 'encounter' which has already occurred with the other. For, the answer to which the 'me' has already responded, as issuing from the other-within-me prior to any question or questioning. Lévinas's concept is not one grounded in Husserlian intentionality or the Hegelian dialectic, and also differs from the relation of *presence* of the interlocutors to one another in dialogue, in which they are in agreement with one another in a peaceful relation.³¹⁰

The next section in which Lévinas mentions the other within the self again is in the section entitled 'The Self', within the central chapter of the book, 'Substitution'. Here, the concept arises in the context of the discussion of the absolute passivity of a subjectivity obsessed by the other in the same, and occurs alongside another modality of subjectivity - that of inspiration. 'The subjectivity as *the other in the same*, as an inspiration, is the putting into question of all affirmation for-oneself, all egoism born again in this very recurrence.'³¹¹ It marks, it seems, yet another confrontation with and dismissal of the Hegelian (and later, Sartrean) notion of the *for-itself* (*pour soi*), a subjectivity questioning itself through an intentional return to self. For Lévinas, there is no return to self, as is developed in the essay on 'Recurrence'. If such a flight out of oneself, if such a *split* were at all possible, the subject would find itself rewritten as the

³⁰⁸ Lévinas, *O.B.*, *op.cit.*, p. 25.

³⁰⁹ The use of 'ontological' here would correspond to the empirical, or ontical level for Heidegger, Husserl et al. Lévinas, as previously stated, undercuts both levels with what he takes to be the more 'primordial' level of ethics.

³¹⁰ This is also the kernel of the reason for Lévinas's implicit dismissal of any theories grounded in the Hegelian theory of recognition, such as the Habermasian 'consensus', etc. Lévinas would be critical of any theory based on reciprocity on the basis of an internalisation of the other and the subsequent destruction of the Other's alterity.

³¹¹ Lévinas, *O.B.*, *op.cit.*, p.111.

other within the same. There isn't, however, the possibility of any intentional splitting of the self; the subject is put in question, obsessed, suffocated, traumatised, persecuted and riveted to its own being by the other within the same that is substitution.³¹²

At the end of the section we find the first designation of the other within the same as 'psychism': 'The [psychism] is the other in the same, without alienating the same.'³¹³ As has been noted, and Lévinas himself emphasises, the alienation he alludes to is not alienation in the usual sense of isolation or removedness from one's own self, of the perception of one's own self as an other, as unrecognisably other. The meaning of alienation Lévinas opposes here is attributed to Rimbaud's phrase '*Je est un autre*', a phrase which comes to be central to *O.B.* as a formulation of the relationship between *me* and the other which bypasses the usual ontological *cul de sacs* that other formulations are led into,³¹⁴ translated as 'I am another'. The alienation Lévinas refers to is only given a few cursory references throughout *O.B.*, in which he differentiates his meaning from Rimbaud's as 'not the alienation Rimbaud refers to'.³¹⁵ Precisely how he understands Rimbaud to have meant it is unspecified. A hint as to what the meaning attributed to it might be is provided in an early Lévinasian essay, 'No Identity', in which he writes that Rimbaud might have meant alienation as 'alteration, (...) betrayal of oneself, foreignness with regard to oneself and subjection to this foreigner'.³¹⁶ By contrast, Lévinas opposes alienation to 'a subjectivity incapable of shutting itself up'.³¹⁷ Returning to the other in the same, therefore, it seems the concept is one which Lévinas deems to prevent the 'shutting up' of subjectivity. That is, it is the other in the same, the 'psychism', substitution, which ensures the subject is open, vulnerable, exposed, radically passive.³¹⁸ There are two more references to the other in me, in 'Finite Freedom' ('The other is in me and in the midst of my very identification'³¹⁹) and in 'Skepticism and Reason' ('To require that a communication be sure of being heard is to confuse communication and knowledge, to efface the difference, to fail

³¹² Lévinas, *O.B.*, op. cit., p. 110 f.

³¹³ Lévinas, *O.B.*, p.112.

³¹⁴ Lévinas, *O.B.*, p.118.

³¹⁵ Ibid.

³¹⁶ Lévinas, 'No Identity' ('Sans Identité'), p. 145, in *Collected Philosophical Papers* (Duquesne University Press: Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 1998).

³¹⁷ Lévinas, 'No Identity', op. cit., p. 151. Robert Bernasconi traces the meaning of alienation as Lévinas might have intended it through an analysis of the earlier version of Lévinas's 'Substitution', the essay which, after a number of modifications, finally comes to form the kernel of *O.B.* In his influential essay 'What is the Question to which "Substitution" is the Answer?' Bernasconi situates the meaning of alienation in relation to Lévinas's.

³¹⁸ See Lévinas, 'No Identity', op. cit., p.145 f and *O.B.*, passim.

³¹⁹ Lévinas, *O.B.*, op. cit., p.125.

to recognise the signifyingness of the-one-for-the-other-in-me').³²⁰ The 'other in the midst of my very identification'³²¹ emphasises, once again, the construal of the other within the self as the disturbing, traumatising and unsettling other within, and the unsettling supplementarity³²² of the other within who prevents the process of identification, that is, the return to self to which the ego is predisposed.³²³

The last reference to the other in me incorporates the concept of the *for-the-other*. Lévinas understands Hegel and Sartre to be positing a self 'on the basis of the for-itself', resulting in the identity of the I being 'reducible to the turning back of essence upon itself'.³²⁴ For the Lévinas of O.B., however, the self is not merely for-the-other, as it is *T.I.*, but *for-the-other-within-the-self*. Since the *for itself* of consciousness is well documented as being in direct opposition to Lévinas's *for-the-other* of singularity, O.B. marks a departure, or a step further from the 'egoism' and 'narcissism' of the *pour soi*, or consciousness.³²⁵ If being-for-others was itself an interruption of the Hegelian and Sartrean *for itself* (*pour soi*), then *being-for-the-other-within-the-self* is an interruption at the heart of interruption.

Recurrence

A central modality of subjectivity in O.B. is 'recurrence', a modality of 'ipseity', or the 'me', and inextricably linked to 'substitution'. The reiterative waves of Lévinas's discourse create another modality, crucial to the understanding of substitution and to the concept of the *other-within-the-same*. For, it is in recurrence to itself that ipseity will find not an in-itself, but a oneself 'prior to self-coinciding',³²⁶ not a for-itself, but a *one-for-the-other-within-the-same*. 'The reclusion "in one's own skin", the present essay wishes to suggest, is a movement of the ego into itself, outside of order. The departure from this subterranean digs, from the plenum into

³²⁰ Lévinas, *O.B.*, *op. cit.*, p.167.

³²¹ Ibid.

³²² I am employing supplementarity here in the Derridean sense of that which is excluded but reveals itself to have defined the concept at the heart of which it sits. See Jacques Derrida *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 365 ff, for instance.

³²³ See 'Recurrence', in Lévinas, *O.B.*, *op. cit.*, p. 102, *passim*.

³²⁴ Lévinas, *O.B.*, p. 103.

³²⁵ Whilst the being-for-others concept was used by Sartre, it would not be a concept Lévinas would agree with, since the *être-pour-autrui* is ultimately another perspective on the self from a Lévinasian perspective, and would amount to a reduction of the other to the self. Cf. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology* (London: Routledge), 1995.

³²⁶ Lévinas, *O.B.*, *op. cit.*, p. 195, n. 17 *passim*.

the plenum,³²⁷ leads to a region in which all the weight of Being is borne and supported in the other.³²⁸

Lévinas warns against any interpretations of his descriptions of singularity as biologically-grounded.³²⁹ Even though the terms used often make reference to the bodily, the motivation for their use seems grounded in Lévinas's insistence on emphasising not only sensibility as a modality of being, but the dual aspect of the skin as representing both inside and outside.³³⁰ Thus, such expressions as 'torsion', 'restlessness',³³¹ 'too tight in its skin', 'cramped', 'ill at ease', 'twisted over in its skin' 'backed up against itself'³³² are employed hyperbolically to signify a representation uncontainable to the biological or, for that matter, to materiality, to facticity, in spite of subjectivity's quasi-transcendental status being at once lived, factual, *and* 'beyond'.

'The ego is in itself like one is in one's skin, that is to say cramped, ill at ease with one's skin, as though the identity of matter weighing on itself concealed a dimension allowing a withdrawal

³²⁷ The Latin *plenum* means, literally speaking, a space filled with matter (though not matter in the way we know it, Lévinas might caution) and figuratively fullness. It seems plausible to suggest that *plenum* is employed here to prevent any interpretations of the *other-within-the-same* as covering over a lack or emptiness.

³²⁸ Lévinas, *O.B.*, p. 195, n. 10.

³²⁹ See, for instance: 'The concept of the incarnate subject is not a biological concept. The schema that corporeality outlines submits the biological itself to a higher structure; it is dispossession, but not nothingness, for it is a negativity caught up in the impossibility of evading, without any field of initiative. It is, probably enough, a retreat into the fullness of the punctual, into the inextendedness of the one.' (Emmanuel Lévinas, *O.B.*, *op. cit.*, p. 109) The 'inextendedness of the one' seems to be alluding precisely to the bodily character of ipseity, to the concrete, empirical layer of meaning of the *one-for-the-other-within*. Without this very concrete possibility of suffering, without the very felt possibility of one's rigid skin being too tight in its 'inextendedness', there could be no possibility for ethical action and responsibility. It is incarnation which 'makes giving possible' (*ibid.*) This is, once again, an instance of Lévinas's reiterative descriptions of the *other-within-the-same* as both on the concrete, empirical level, and the metaphysical one, the in-between *without locus* of the quasi-metaphysical. It also emphasises the very personal assignation of 'me', the 'one', as responsible for the other's responsibility and 'the freedom of the others' (*ibid.*). The conflation of the concrete/empirical and metaphysical layers is the cause of much confusion in the reception of Lévinas. I am, following Robert Bernasconi, *op. cit.*, interpreting the two as separate, but linked and necessary layers for the understanding of *ipseity*, and, indeed, of Lévinas's work in general.

³³⁰ This could be taken to be an influence of Merleau-Ponty's writings, which Lévinas greatly admired.

³³¹ Lévinas, *O.B.*, *op. cit.* p. 107.

³³² *Ibid.*, p. 104.

this side of immediate coincidence, as though it concealed a materiality more material than all matter.³³³ The assignation of these modalities to subjectivity seems to point, in a gesture familiar throughout *O.B.*, towards a layer of sensibility on the hither side of the material, that is, more vulnerable, more exposed, than matter. Skin is like ‘a Nessus tunic’,³³⁴ ensuring, through all its potentialities for suffering, the extreme exposure of the subject and signifying the irremissible guilt with regard to the neighbour’.³³⁵

Recurrence, like substitution, is also, crucially, not to be understood as having occurred at some point in a past, even in a ‘flux of immanent time in the Husserlian sense, retaining the past and biting on the future.’³³⁶ It is ‘prior to any distinction between moments’³³⁷ and takes the metaphorical shape of a fulcrum³³⁸ and a Gordian knot³³⁹ in the diachrony of time, *unarchically*.³⁴⁰ This section, like the whole of *O.B.*, is underscored by an acute worry that his attempt to point to the ‘unsayable’ and the ‘unpresentable’ through terms like ‘beyond’, ‘behind’ and the ‘underside’ might lead some readers to erroneously assume yet another ipseity behind the ipseity: ‘To present the knot of ipseity in the straight thread of essence according to the model of the intentionality of the for-itself, or as the openness of reflection upon itself, is to posit a new ipseity behind the ipseity one would like to reduce. [...] The oneself is hypostasized in another way. It is bound in a knot that cannot be undone in a responsibility for others.’³⁴¹ Responsibility for the other, it seems, is ‘what the gestation of the other in the same signifies’,³⁴² pointing to maternity as the epitome of the *being-for-the-other-within-the-same*. The aim of this particular modal wave – recurrence – seems to be, like ‘substitution’, to emphasise, once again, the *other-within-the-self* that is the hidden ‘fabric’ of subjectivity.³⁴³ Lévinas’s pointed discourse targets Hegel’s and Sartre’s theory of consciousness as characterised by the ‘for-itself’. The ‘turning back of essence upon itself’ of consciousness would, as a result of substitution and the *other-within-the-self*, find not a unity, but a splitting, an ‘outdoing of unity’,³⁴⁴ a wedge at the

³³³ Ibid., p. 108.

³³⁴ Ibid., p. 109.

³³⁵ Ibid.

³³⁶ Ibid., p. 104.

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ Ibid., p. 106.

³³⁹ Ibid., p. 105.

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

³⁴¹ Ibid.

³⁴² Ibid.

³⁴³ Cf. ‘This is the underside of a fabric woven where there is consciousness and which takes place in being’ (Lévinas, *O.B.*, *op. cit.* p. 103).

³⁴⁴ Lévinas, *O.B.*, p. 108.

heart of subjectivity. And it is the *other-within-the-same*, epitomised in maternity which here prevents the coinciding of the self with itself: ‘Maternity in the complete being “for the other” which characterizes it, which is the very signifyingness of signification, is the ultimate sense of this vulnerability. Maternity therefore signifies the recurrence *by contraction that* the self is.’³⁴⁵ It is, itself, the fulcrum of Lévinas’s hyperbolic descriptions of the other within the self, encompassing the extreme suffering without reprise, without hope of resignation’,³⁴⁶ without any alleviation of the absolute responsibility for the other within, *for nothing*. In other words, female and maternal supererogation are exemplary of ipseity as the other-within-the-self. The alignment of the feminine with supererogation is something feminist commentators have found problematic.³⁴⁷ If the ‘repetitive waves’³⁴⁸ of Lévinas’s descriptions of subjectivity culminate in the description of ipseity as having the modality of maternity, there may be scope, within Lévinas’s own work, for the possibility of a being-with that does not necessarily appeal to the androcentric concept of fraternity. We shall come back to this in Chapter Three.

Contra-diction: What is the Saying, what is the Said?

Conceptualising the relationship between the Saying and the Said is subject to a particularly difficult set of conundrums, all pertaining to the inner dynamic between the two terms in Lévinas’s work. It could be argued that the Saying is the *condition for the possibility of* the Said, the exposure to the other before any Said *as such*, as long as one recalls that in Lévinasian terms, a ‘condition for the possibility of’ should not be taken to establish any type of ‘ground’ or ontological ‘basis’. In a certain sense, I have always already faced the Other, since the Other has already called upon my subjectivity to respond to the ethical demand that the Other’s existence places upon me. The Saying is exposure, vulnerability, flesh and corporeality, the performativity of the self in all its concreteness, and addressing the Other, instead of that which is addressed to the Other, whilst the Said is the content of that which is performed, exposed, and flayed, the

³⁴⁵ Lévinas, *O.B.*, p. 108 (emphasis mine).

³⁴⁶ Lévinas, *O.B.*, p. 105.

³⁴⁷ Along with the ‘feminine’, ‘fecundity’ and other related modalities of existence, ‘maternity’ is a highly contested notion in the reception of Lévinas, particularly amongst his feminist commentators. (See, for instance: Stella Sandford, ‘Lévinas in the realm of the senses: transcendence and intelligibility’, in *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities*, 4, no. 3, (1999): 61-73, and Stella Sandford, ‘Masculine Mothers? Maternity in Lévinas and Plato’, in Tina Chanter (ed.) *Feminist Interpretations of Emmanuel Lévinas* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 2001, 80-102).

³⁴⁸ A reference to Derrida’s own description of Lévinas’s reiterative writings as being ‘like waves crashing on a beach’ (Jacques Derrida, ‘Violence and Metaphysics’, in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Allan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 312.

thematization of language and the word. If the Saying could be conceptualised as the condition for the possibility of the Said, it is also, in keeping with my argument thus far, *interruption*. The Said could be interpreted, in the Lévinasian schema, if we may allow ourselves to momentarily think of it as such as an heuristic device, as aligned with a set of terms which in *Totality and Infinity*, and throughout other works, including the rest of *O.B.* are in a relation to the Saying, Infinity, face, ethics. Thus, the Said is a later conceptualisation of Lévinas's earlier development of totality, war and politics.

In his essay 'Lévinas on the Saying and the Said', Bernhard Waldenfels makes the distinction between the *Saying without the Said* (*le dire sans le dit*) and the *Saying with-out the Said* (within and without at once)³⁴⁹. The distinction is a very helpful one in underlining, from a linguistic perspective, the thesis I have expounded so far: that of the interruptive relationship between the Saying and the Said, mirroring the concept of the *other-within-the-self*. What Waldenfels's distinction foregrounds is precisely the conceptualisation of the *Said* as the interruptive *other-within* of the *Saying*, contrary to some commentators' beliefs that Lévinas's *Saying* is meant to resemble a purism of the unadulterated, absolute *Saying*. His thesis, from the perspective of linguistic pragmatics, foregrounds a *Saying* which is interrupted by the cultural traditions permeating language, areas pertaining to an 'outside of' *Saying*, which nevertheless come to leave their mark, or their trace, upon it.

Whilst my point does not necessarily concern linguistics or the cultural traces left upon the *Saying* (although this is, indeed, an important aspect of the 'impurity' of any purported *Saying*), what the distinction brings to the fore is the impossibility of thinking a purist *Saying*, and the necessity of taking into account an interruptive relationship between the *Saying* and the *Said*. The notion of 'creative responsivity' Waldenfels expounds, a bringing together of the Husserlian 'one-within-the-other' (*Ineinander*) and Lévinas's notion of 'one-for-the-other' emphasises the occluded 'who' of the other who speaks and addresses me within the *Saying*.

Waldenfels disputes the existence of a *Saying* 'before and without that which is said'³⁵⁰ and seems to be emphasising the subjectivity of the 'me' in discourse, against Lévinas's asymmetrical relationship between the demand of the Other and my response to his or her call. 'Lévinas seems to be right when he emphasises that we do not create that to which we respond', Waldenfels writes, 'but he neglected the fact that we do create to some extent that which we give as response. Consequently, there is no *Saying* without something said; at best, there is a

³⁴⁹ Bernhard Waldenfels 'Lévinas on the Saying and the Said', in Eric Sean Nelson, Antje Kapust, and Kent Still, *Addressing Lévinas*, (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2005), p. 86.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

Saying with-out what is said.³⁵¹ Responding, for him, starting elsewhere, without being grounded there, gives rise to what he calls ‘the paradox of creative responsivity’, resembling Merleau-Ponty’s ‘paradox of creative expression’ (ibid.). It therefore gives far more valence than Lévinas would like to the *me*, which, in Lévinas’s formulations in O.B., is stripped of any agency. Waldenfels’s responsivity is something Lévinas might deem as having always already happened, without the necessity or perhaps even the *possibility* of creativity at work.

Waldenfels’s ‘corrective’ to the Lévinasian asymmetry between the Saying and the Said resembles Hans-Georg Gadamer’s mutually-affecting relationship between the hermeneutic text and the subjectivity of the reader, what he calls the ‘median point of play’ where the creative work occurs between the *in itself* of the work of art or the text and the subjectivity of the viewer or speaker, in a quasi-Hegelian dialectic of ‘play’. Indeed, the distinction between the ludic, or ‘jeu’ and ‘game’ is also something Waldenfels underlines, in reminding us of the Platonic difference between the ‘play’ or ‘game’ character of writing and the seriousness of the vivid voice,³⁵² which he sees Lévinas as following, to a degree.

Of course, the ‘gravity’ ascribed to Saying which Lévinas alludes to,³⁵³ is always one pertaining to the concrete, to ‘experience’, as Waldenfels puts it (ibid.). In spite of Waldenfels’s subjectivity of the ‘me’ being one Lévinas would most likely disagree with as ‘not passive enough’, his is an important reconfiguration of the relation between the Saying and the Said as intrinsically marked by a mutually-interruptive, or mutually-destabilising relationship, as we might say with Lévinas. Waldenfels’s criticism of Lévinas seems, however, to be motivated by the apparent interpretation of the Saying Lévinas proposes as pertaining to an *in itself*, outside of the Said. As shown above, however, the interruptive relationship between the Saying and the Said is, in fact, intrinsic to Lévinas’s own framework. There is no *in itself* of Saying. Or rather, if the Saying is in any way a condition for the possibility of the Said, then it is one already grounded in the experiential.

The concept of contra-diction is briefly referred to by Derrida in *Adieu to Emmanuel Lévinas*³⁵⁴ and employed to capture the internal disjunction at the heart of the Saying, the *contra-*, the resistance that the Said poses to speech before speech in the concrete, ‘since’ an immemorial time. It signifies the self-interruption of diction, the break within *le dit* enacted by *le dire*.

³⁵¹ Ibid., p. 96.

³⁵² Ibid., p. 95.

³⁵³ Cf. Lévinas, O.B., *op. cit.*, p. 6, *passim*.

³⁵⁴ Derrida, *Adieu*, *op. cit.* p. 30.

Lévinas uses the term ‘contradiction’ himself, in *O.B.*, to describe the distance that the third introduces within the relation between the self and other, and within the Saying. That is, as shown above, there is a necessity in the interruption of the self-Other relation effected by the third. The necessity of this interruption is one which must be understood as standing on the ‘hither’ side of temporality, designating an always-already of the internal schism, ‘structurally’ intrinsic to the Saying and to the relationship between self and Other. The hyphen in ‘contradiction’, introduced by Derrida, emphasises precisely the distance introduced by the third within the self-Other relation, its necessarily ruptured structure, as well as the focus on the linguistic aspect of ‘diction’ (Lévinas’s Saying). With the third comes the necessity of justice, along with the set of terms Lévinas usually enumerates as necessarily related to or even equivalent to justice: thematization, synchrony, coexistence, comparison, etc. With the realm of justice also comes a necessary return to ontology and also consciousness.

The third introduces a contra-diction in the Saying... It is of itself the limit of responsibility and the birth of the question: What do I have to do with justice? A question of conscience, of consciousness. Justice is necessary, that is, comparison, coexistence, contemporaneousness, assembling.³⁵⁵

Assembling, ‘being with’ and, implicitly, community, are all corollaries of justice and the State. Insofar as this ‘necessity of contemporaneousness’, equivalent to justice and the third is to be understood in the strong sense - that is, as a necessity intrinsic to its very structure – community, ‘being with’ not only constitutes a necessity of the self-Other relation, an interruption of the relation on the hither side of justice between me and the Other, but also underscores this very relation. Not only does it constitute ‘the condition for the possibility of’ the relation between self and Other, but it is one that is inextricably, ineluctably grounded in the concrete.

One important facet of interiority, taken up by Derrida, is the designation of interiority as ‘feminine’ in *T.I.* Derrida follows the analysis of the feminine as absolute alterity, as developed by Lévinas in *T.I.*, through the concepts of the ‘welcome’ and ‘host’. According to this analysis, the feminine constitutes the host at the heart of the home, and, by analogy, the interiority of the subject, the very condition of the exposure and vulnerability in the face of the Other, the passive ‘receiver’ of any general guest before the activity of any welcoming as such: ‘This absolute precedence of the welcome, of the welcoming, of welcoming [*accueilance*] would be precisely the femininity of “Woman”, interiority as femininity – and “feminine alterity.”’ The

³⁵⁵ Lévinas, *O.B.*, *op. cit.*, p. 157.

androcentric and traditional aspects of the feminine within Lévinas have been analysed at length by Derrida in *Politics of Friendship*,³⁵⁶ a text we will return to.

In *Adieu*, however, Derrida emphasises another possible ‘progressive’ reading of the feminine in Lévinas’s work, in what might be referred to as a ‘classical’ Derridean gesture, the possibility of a radically feminist reading of Lévinas’s text. The shift in focus allows Derrida to conceive of femininity in Lévinas’s text as the *sine qua non* of subjectivity. The feminist manifesto that Lévinas’s text might constitute, according to Derrida, is grounded in the ‘welcome par excellence’, a ‘pre-originary hospitality’ receiving the Other before an empirical welcome.³⁵⁷ In so far as this welcoming is nothing less than the ‘pre-ethical origin of ethics, on the basis of femininity’, “Woman”, that is, the ‘feminine being’, not the ‘fact of empirical women’,³⁵⁸ is equated with the anarchic ‘origin’ of the interiority of the self. Since the home, the dwelling is employed by Lévinas as a metaphor of interiority of the self, Woman becomes the very modality by which this interiority is prevented from constituting an hermetic space, open and vulnerable in spite of oneself: ‘[...] the pre-original welcome, the welcoming par excellence, is feminine; it takes place in a place that cannot be appropriated, in an open “interiority” whose hospitality the master or owner receives before himself then wishing to give it.’³⁵⁹ In a gesture anticipating the concept of the *other-within-the-self*, the feminine, in Derrida’s analysis, takes on the aspect of the *absolute passivity* that Lévinas develops in *O.B.* The other within the same is a concept Derrida develops as ‘the welcome’ or ‘hospitality’, as we shall see in Chapter Three.

Community of Singularities

Following the analysis of the *other within the same* and the third *in the eyes of the other within the same*, it seems plausible to suggest, in keeping with the *other within the same* being a modality of the relation between self and other, that the third within the eyes of the other is a modality of universality for Lévinas, and also the political, since there is little if any differentiation between the two in his work. If, with the third, comes universality, the political, and with it, justice ‘for me’,³⁶⁰ as well as for the other and all others, it seems that the third is a modality, a ‘how’ of the political, for Lévinas, and, by extension, universality, the being with one another of all others. Inasmuch as the third is already within *the other within me*, then, this being with one another of all others is shown, diachronically, anarchically, to always have been

³⁵⁶ Derrida, *P.F.*, *op. cit.*

³⁵⁷ Derrida, *Adieu*, p. 44.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁹ Jacques Derrida, *Adieu*, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

³⁶⁰ Lévinas, *O.B.*, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

there, from the beginning without a beginning, as it were. Interiority, in *T.I.*, was presented before exteriority by virtue of the constraints of the Said upon the Saying, and the necessity of situating the work within the confines of philosophy and the written word, even as modified to a barely recognisable degree under Lévinas's exigent pen.

In *T.I.*, even though the relationship between self and other was *presented* as culminating in the movement of desire of the self *towards* the other, exteriority and the other as height conditioned interiority.³⁶¹ In the same way, even though the third is presented, in relation to justice, the political, and universality, towards the end of *O.B.*, it is presented as already there is the eyes of the other (who is already within me). The third is, in other words, there from the beginning, and conditions the relation between the self and other in the same ways that the relation between the *me* and the other conditions interiority and enjoyment in *T.I.*, as well as earlier works (*E.E.*, *O.E.*, etc.). It is otherwise no surprise at all that the concept of the third is developed in the chapter sketching the relationship between the Saying and the Said, in which the importance of the presentation of the Saying within a Said, with all its corollaries, is stressed.

Supplementarity and the Political

Part of Lévinas's aim in *O.B.* could be said to be a continuation of his critique of ontology as a reconfiguration of the political. Unlike Simon Critchley, who claims that the ethical is ethical 'for the purpose of' politics,³⁶² I wish to suggest that a corollary of the critique of ontology and the defence of the metaphysics of the subject in Lévinas's work is that a parallel line of argument has emerged, which sets politics up as the *interruptive force* within the ethical.

If we are to borrow Derridean logic, in *T.I.*, ethics was set up as the 'supplement' to the totalising force of the political, following the acute sense running throughout the work, of it being written in the wake of the Holocaust. By contrast, one of the aims of Lévinas's project in *O.B.* is the setting up of *peace* as the underlying level beneath *war* and *totality*. That is, infinity and peace are shown to always have underwritten and undercut the presupposed primacy of war, politics and implicitly, totality. It is not a coincidence that the importance of the question of whether peace undercut war and totality is stressed throughout the kernel of *O.B.*, and particularly in 'Substitution'.³⁶³

³⁶¹ See Tanja Staehler, *Plato and Lévinas, op.cit.*, for a supporting argument in the context of the relation between Plato and Lévinas.

³⁶² Simon Critchley, 'Introduction', in *The Cambridge Companion to Lévinas*, eds. Robert Bernasconi and Simon Critchley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 25.

³⁶³ Lévinas, *O.B.*, *op. cit.*, p. 99 ff.

It is then not without importance to know if the egalitarian and just State in which man is fulfilled (and which is to be set up, and especially to be maintained) proceeds from a war of all against all, or from the irreducible responsibility of the one for all, and if it can do without friendships and faces.³⁶⁴

We shall return to the question of friendship in the next chapter. The same question, in a different context, arises much earlier in *O.B.*, in 'Substitution', where Lévinas states that 'it is (...) not certain that war was at the beginning, before the altars.'³⁶⁵ Though mainly surfacing in a discussion concerning subjectivity, the quotation seems to be emphasising, once again, the primacy of peace at the bottom of war, here signalled through the metaphoric reference to 'altars'.³⁶⁶ Part of Lévinas's aim, in this enigmatic but important remark, seems to be an attempt to undercut the Hobbesian assumption of the 'war of all against all' conditioning human relationships.³⁶⁷

The reference to peace underlying war was, in fact, brought up towards the end of *T.I.*, where Lévinas states, quite clearly, that 'war presupposes peace, the antecedent and non-allergic presence of the other; it does not represent the first event of the encounter'.³⁶⁸ If *T.I.* takes up the theme in relation to the development of subjectivity through the encounter between the self and the other, the latter of which is conceived of as exteriority, *O.B.* seems to be the locus of addressing the question of the 'we', or the evincing of peace as not only underlying 'my' relation to the other, but also the basis of being-in-common. Given the evincing/revealing of peace at the bottom of the Hobbesian 'war of all against all'³⁶⁹ the 'just and egalitarian State' Lévinas refers to undergoes a similar shift to the one the self underwent in *T.I.*, as a result of the 'encounter' with the Other. The being-in-common that Lévinas alludes to is indeed revealed to rest on 'equality' and 'justice' built on the relation between the self and other as other-within-the-self, as peaceful 'exposure' and 'nudity'. We are 'in common' only insofar as the modalities of traditional being-in-common (equality, justice, etc.) found, for Lévinas, on the ontological level, rest on a primordial metaphysical peace. We are in common, that is, only insofar as the restless self of subjectivity is one founded upon the torturous basis of the other-within-me. For, it is this which ensures that the ontological relation between the self, other and the third - and,

³⁶⁴ Lévinas, *O.B.*, *op. cit.*, p. 159 f., p. 203.

³⁶⁵ Lévinas, *O.B.*, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

³⁶⁶ On the methodological usage of religious language as a reference to the 'beyond' which phenomenology lacks the linguistic tools to engage with, see my Introduction.

³⁶⁷ Hobbes, Thomas, *Leviathan*, Flatman, R.E & Johnson (eds.) (London: W.W. Norton, 1997)

³⁶⁸ Lévinas, *T.I.*, p. 199.

³⁶⁹ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, *op. cit.*

through the third, all others and universality - constitutes a modification, in its possible war-like character, of an originary peace.

In other words, even though the political may, sometimes, be defined by war and the possible totalising relation to the other - something Lévinas has always been acutely aware of and could not possibly deny - it is ultimately a mutation, 'perversion', or 'inversion' of a peace at the bottom of war. Peace may, however, be a misleading choice of term in this context. For it is not a beatific, serene type of peace Lévinas refers to, but a restless peace contained within the torturous effect of the other-within-the-self, alongside the exposure and the flaying that the encounter with the other constitutes.

Lévinas has been widely criticised for apparently failing to take into account that the way the face discloses itself to subjectivity is often through violence, hate and disdain, contra Lévinas's assertions in, *T.I.*, for instance, that the face of the other reveals itself to 'me' as prohibition to murder.³⁷⁰ In a discussion with Philippe Nemo,³⁷¹ in which Lévinas is questioned on the above, he replies by underlining, once again, the 'overlooking' of the primordial peace at the bottom of war, which sometimes manifests, in the encounter with the other, through violence and hatred: 'to be sure, but I think that whatever the motivation which explains this *inversion*, the analysis of the face-to-face as I have just made, with the mastery of the Other and his poverty, with my submission and my wealth, is primary.'³⁷² That is, not only is peace at the bottom of war, but my submission to the other, my response to the call of the other which comes before language, and before the possibility of the ontological (empirical) violent relation with the Other, with *an* other, there is 'submission' and my undeniable 'wealth' in relation to the other, due to which I am compelled to respond. It is this tortured peace alongside the restless subjectivity, defined as the other-within-the-self that politics (with its corresponding signifiers of war and totality) interrupts.

Following the logic of the supplement, which, as is widely known, Derrida follows and develops further throughout his works, the relationship between politics and ethics comes to be analysed from a different perspective in *O.B.* The relationship between the supplement and that which it interrupts comes to be inverted in the analysis, in order to highlight a different side of the same relation. *T.I.* is widely thought of as a work on ethics. As has been widely noted, this work is one focused on the reinstatement of the ethical within totality, of the establishment of the ethical

³⁷⁰ Lévinas, *T.I.*, *op. cit.*, p. 199.

³⁷¹ Lévinas, *Ethics and Infinity: Conversations with Philippe Nemo*, trans. Richard A. Cohen (Pittsburg: Duquesne University Press, 1985), pp. 88-89, my emphasis.

³⁷² See Peter Dews's 'Ethics à l'Outrance' for an extended discussion of this exchange in the context of the question of evil, in Peter Dews, *The Idea of Evil* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008).

as the anarchic supplement interrupting totality. The self's relationship with infinity, built in exteriority and through the figure of the Other, is one which 'bursts through' and undermines totality.

In *O.B.*, by contrast, the relationship between totality and infinity, politics and ethics is inverted, leading, along with the evincing of peace as the transcendental condition for the possibility of war, to the setting up of war, politics and totality as the disequilibrating force within. This is not tantamount to claiming that in Lévinas's *O.B.* infinity comes to be construed as totality, or, as some commentators have claimed,³⁷³ following the above corollary of Lévinas's analysis, that the other (as opposed to the ego) comes to represent the totality, war and even 'evil' at the bottom of peace. This particular analysis was supported by the terms Lévinas uses to describe the persecutory role of the other in *O.B.* My contention is, rather, that *O.B.* involves a radical *change of perspective* in the quasi-phenomenology of the relationship between self and other. The political, mediated by the work of proximity to the other and obsession by the other, emerges as a corrective and supplement to the ethical, just as ethics had been a corrective to the ontology of war and politics in *T.I.*

Community of Singularities: Being other-within-the-Same

*'At the end of the day, there remains what remains yesterday and what will remain tomorrow: the insatiable, unquantifiable longing to be both the same and other.'*³⁷⁴

After a development of a subjectivity inexistent in and of itself if not persecuted, obsessed by the other and expiation, Lévinas states that it is as if 'persecution by the other were at the bottom of solidarity with one another.'³⁷⁵ The self is called into question by the other prior to being questioned, and my responsibility for him or her is untransferable and irrefusable.³⁷⁶ In one of the significant changes of direction from *T.I.*, he adds that the other no longer simply limits the same, puts his or her very freedom into question, but is supported by what it limits.³⁷⁷ The gaping space between self and other in *T.I.*, the exteriority carefully construed to curb the

³⁷³ Peter Dews, *The Idea of Evil*, *op. cit.* (see my analysis below).

³⁷⁴ Pessoa, F. *The Book of Disquiet*, (London: Penguin Classics, 2002) p. 25.

³⁷⁵ Lévinas, *O.B.*, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

³⁷⁶ Lévinas, 'Substitution', in *Basic Philosophical Writings*, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

³⁷⁷ Lévinas, *O.B.*, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

freedom of a self-assured subjectivity now becomes interiority, a tortuous substitution whereby the other becomes persecutor. And it is through this persecution that anything resembling a community can exist. In what Lévinas calls, by a double torsion, ‘this most passive passivity’, the self does not simply stand accused by an other presented in destitution. If any attempt of a return to self were to be undertaken, if any search for a self-same identity were to be sought, subjectivity would return to find not only a non-correspondence, but a substitution of self for other. And this, it should be stressed, is not an interiorization of the other, as found in Sartre, various other philosophical strands and much of psychoanalysis. The very definition of the self is dependent on it being persecuted by the other. Were it not for this, there would be no self at all.

The other, that is, substitutes the self, which is then moved into a Messianic position from whence it supports and is guilty for all others. ‘Messianism’, Lévinas writes in *Difficult Freedom*, ‘is therefore not the certainty of the coming of a man who stops History. It is my power to bear the suffering of all. It is the moment when I recognise this power and my universal responsibility.’³⁷⁸ Various interpretations have been offered for Lévinas’s theory of substitution, and for this gravitation towards a position in which the ‘I’ takes on a formal Messianic role, but it is one, in particular, I would like to contest.

Evil’s Blind Eye for Politics

Peter Dews’s analysis of the idea of evil through philosophical encounters with its treatment in the work of Kant, Fichte and Schelling, Hegel, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, Lévinas and, finally, Adorno seems to draw on Lévinas’s work as exemplary of an eventually nihilistic philosophical position with regards to the ‘point’ of ethical action. Dews concludes by pointing out that Lévinas’s mature work in *O.B.* refuses to appropriately address the Kantian suggestion for the necessity of an incentive for moral action or ‘the point of ethical commitment’.³⁷⁹ To Lévinas, any ‘reward’³⁸⁰ for morality would be heir to the Christian notion of redemption, of which he is highly critical, and would be tantamount to an inappropriate ethical response to the call of the other. Lévinas therefore responds to previous attempts to provide such an incentive for moral action by eschewing the entire question and insisting on an impossibly exigent burden on the subject.

³⁷⁸ Lévinas, *Difficult Freedom*, *op. cit.* p. 90.

³⁷⁹ Dews, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

³⁸⁰ Lévinas, *Difficult Freedom*, p. 161.

In Dews's account, Lévinas's Messianic redefinition of subjectivity as supporter of the world is employed to preclude the possibility of evil.³⁸¹ By casting expiation and suffering as the very definition of subjectivity,³⁸² by collapsing the distance between self and other set up in *T.I.* and earlier works, and finally, by bringing the Good to 'huddle in the depths of [...] subjectivity',³⁸³ Lévinas is led into the impasse of equating the Good with trauma and suffering and into the counterintuitive implication that evil primarily comes from the other.³⁸⁴ Singularity, now defined as 'the non-interchangeable par excellence, the I, the unique one, substitut(ing) itself for others',³⁸⁵ is attributed god-like capacities in its limitless responsibility. And it is this gesture, this assignation of god-like attributes to the human, which eventually leads to the impossibility of escape from the crushing burden of persecution. Lévinas has responded to the danger that the concept of the autonomous subject and human freedom pose to ethics by extirpating any trace of autonomy or freedom, understood as the classical Western tradition defines them, from the definition of the subject. By making persecution by the other the very definition of the 'I' and the basis of being together³⁸⁶, Dews claims, Lévinas eventually invites another return to the impersonal, nauseating world of the *il y a*, the world of enjoyment from which the self emerges as a subjectivity. The subject's 'supporting without compensation'³⁸⁷ discloses the incessant, nauseating tumult of the *il y a*. Whilst his analysis of Lévinas's admittedly mosaic and indirect treatment of the concept of evil is illuminating, Dews's conclusions about Lévinas's 'capitulation' in the face of the problem of evil are contestable on several levels.

One of the questions raised by Peter Dews concerns the idea of freedom and what Lévinas's development of the self-other relation in *O.B.* means for freedom. In *T.I.* there was the possibility of a perversion of the ethical response, almost a 'bad faith' in Sartrean terms,³⁸⁸ if we allow for sincerity and peace being at the basis of insincerity and war. With *O.B.*, however, the transition to the ethical response to the call of the Other is seamless and, in fact, comes to define the self, leaving no space for 'choice'.

³⁸¹ Peter Dews is not alone in interpreting Lévinas's work as being a response to the problem of evil. Richard Bernstein, for instance, also explicitly takes this view, extending it to his whole *œuvre* (see Richard J. Bernstein, 'Evil and the temptation of theodicy', in *The Cambridge Companion to Lévinas*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 253.

³⁸² Dews, P. "Lévinas: Ethics à l' Outrance", in *The Idea of Evil*, p. 181.

³⁸³ Lévinas, *God and Philosophy*, in Emmanuel Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, trans. Alfonso Lingis, (Pittsburg: Duquesne University Press, 1987), p. 141.

³⁸⁴ Dews, *op. cit.*, p. 181.

³⁸⁵ Lévinas, *O.B.*, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

³⁸⁸ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, *op. cit.*, Chapter Two.

However, with *O.B.*, there is no origin for my debt to the other and my responsibility for the other, no limit to my suffering for the other. Questions of origin, then, including that of evil, as Peter Dews poses it, are misplaced. The 'I' stands from the beginning faultlessly, passively accused. Dews's conclusion is that the ethical response to the other becomes futile. His conclusion is that if 'good huddles in the depths of subjectivity',³⁸⁹ in shifting the good back into inwardness, at the heart of subjectivity, the possibility for the ethical demand to be meaningful is eliminated. The ethical demand, in other words, would then have meaninglessness huddled at its core. I contend, instead, that it is not productive to draw such a conclusion, since it occludes the possibility for the investigation of the function of the political in Lévinas's texts. The case is not that ethics, through the other, remains 'trapped' in interiority, but that Lévinas is investigating other links with the political, which, in *O.B.*, take the place of the other in the previous analysis (*T.I.*), an Other which has, up to this point, been conceived of as dwelling in exteriority.

Whilst the parallels between the stultifying world of the *il y a* and the burden and persecution the other represent in *O.B.* are noted by Lévinas himself³⁹⁰ as far as the horror of being as suffering is concerned, there is no suggestion that the parallel goes further to serve as a preclusion to action. Put succinctly, in earlier Lévinasian texts³⁹¹ subjectivity developed out of the nauseating tumult of the *il y a* through the movement of desire towards the other. Given that *O.B.* is also the work where Lévinas allocates the most space to developing the notion of the third, one might say that in *O.B.*, subjectivity, as defined through and enabled by the subjection to the other, persecution and suffering, develops towards the third and universality, which introduce the idea of justice and the 'point' of ethical action, as well as justice for *me*,³⁹² that is, for the persecuted subject. Insofar as the third is already in the eyes of the other³⁹³ it could be stated that, to paraphrase Heidegger, the third is always already the clearing within the clearing.

If the other, alongside the Good, is internalised in *O.B.*, and so represents the clearing within subjectivity, the third is the clearing within the clearing, enabling the 'point' of ethical action and disputing Dews's claim that Lévinas's analysis ultimately amounts to a 'loss of faith or hope in the future, that the ethical stands on the brink of futility'.³⁹⁴ Although there is no prescriptive element, no 'ought' to Lévinasian ethics, nor is there a refusal to allow oneself a

³⁸⁹ Direct reference to Sartre's 'nothingness lies coiled at the heart of being, like a worm.' *B.N.*, *op. cit.*, p. 21, given the intentional parallels between his and Lévinas's concept of the '*il y a*'.

³⁹⁰ Lévinas, *O.B.*, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

³⁹¹ Lévinas, *On Escape*, *op. cit.*, *Existence and Existents*, *op. cit.*

³⁹² *Ibid.*

³⁹³ See my earlier analysis.

³⁹⁴ Dews, *op. cit.*, p. 182.

‘glimmer of confidence in the Goodness of the world’.³⁹⁵ Lévinas does not pose the question for it to be answered thus. He is, instead, providing a radically new definition of subjectivity which might be seen as launching an ethical *quasi-phenomenology* of the subject.

Dews’s account overlooks important repercussions of the development of Lévinas’s notion of the third. What the account fails to consider are the political implications of what he reads as a collapse of the boundary between ethics and politics, freedom and unfreedom. For, as stated above, it is the figure of the third which invites an ‘escape’, if we are to use Peter Dews’s term, from within the persecutory relation between self and the other-within-the-self.

Notwithstanding the fact that for Lévinas, this persecution is not a negative inwardness, but a positive preclusion of the existence of a solipsistic, egotistic self, what the development of the figure of the third in his later works achieves is the necessary opening of the ethical relation between self and the other who is obsessing and traumatizing the self and for whom I am nonetheless infinitely and absolutely responsible, into politics and justice. There is a strong continuity here with T.I. and his descriptions of the third not as an empirical arrival on the scene of a third party, but as something that is already there, through the other’s commitment to another Other. The relationship with the third party, writes Lévinas, is ‘an incessant correction of the asymmetry of proximity.’³⁹⁶ ‘The extra-ordinary commitment of the other to the third party calls for control, a search for justice, society and the State, comparison and possession, thought and science, commerce and philosophy, and outside of anarchy, the search for a principle.’³⁹⁷

Additionally, Dews’s interpretation of the self’s messianic position as being supporter of the world places the emphasis on something Lévinas has struggled to avoid: the willed, free choice, the ‘altruistic’ movement out of an egotistic self towards the other and all others, to be bearer of the world. In other words, Dews’s messianic self in Lévinas is too active a subject. What Lévinas’s analysis of the messianic subject reveals is not a bearer of the world with the *capacity* of expiating and substituting itself for others. It *is* this originary expiation, as Lévinas states in *O.B.* There is no self invested with god-like attributes,³⁹⁸ capable of sacrificing itself in an act of goodness and generosity. The self *is* persecution if it is at all.³⁹⁹

³⁹⁵ Dews, *op. cit.*, p. 182.

³⁹⁶ Lévinas, *O.B.*, *op. cit.*, p. 161.

³⁹⁷ Ibid.

³⁹⁸ Dews, *op. cit.*, p. 181.

³⁹⁹ Lévinas, *O.B.*, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

Prioritisation of Ethics Over Politics

We shall now briefly address a theme running throughout this study and Lévinas's work: the question of whether Lévinas prioritises ethics over politics. As should by now be apparent, all constructions addressing ethics and the necessary relation to politics begin, in Lévinas's work, with the face-to-face, after which the duality is immediately or eventually remedied with the introduction of the third. I have used 'remedied' in order to emphasise precisely the necessity of introducing justice into a duality which, Lévinas believes, does not allow for such questions; not yet. That is, before the introduction of the third. Despite Lévinas carefully emphasising the figure of the third to already have been there with the other, difficulties imposed by language itself dictate that, at times, it looks as if Lévinas prioritises ethics over politics.

This move, however, is inscribed within a certain necessity and is not due to carelessness. Robert Bernasconi writes that Lévinas's more careful formulations avoid placing ethics in a narrative idiom, and presents, instead, in *O. B.*, the ethical and the political as a difference between layers of meaning.⁴⁰⁰

Lévinas's reformulations of language, leading to a tortuous doubling of meaning, are, of course, largely a response to Derrida's influential text 'Violence and Metaphysics', in which he claimed that Lévinas's language, in *T. I.*, was still locked in ontology, was still using the language of Being, something Lévinas's entire project was reeling against. Derrida's analysis of *T. I.* led him to conclude that, in trying to hold infinity and totality apart, Lévinas has inadvertently assumed he could 'tell the truth about the other', and eventually reduced infinity to totality in so doing.⁴⁰¹ It is also Derrida who later develops an analysis of the productive 'gap' between ethics and politics in *Adieu*, by shifting focus away from this purported jump and into the point of intersection. We will come back to this.

Following Derrida's comments on *T.I.* and after the development of *O.B.*, it is my contention that Lévinas's apparent construal of ethics as more primordial than politics may simply be another necessary move, meant to emphasise the necessity of the concept of the Said within the Saying, the former of which. Broadly and schematically, the Said is associated by Lévinas with politics, language, laws, institutions, justice and the synchrony of time, and the Saying with ethics, anachrony, the other than being, infinity, substitution, etc. What Lévinas may have insisted on underlining with this formal construal, then, could be the necessity of subjecting the

⁴⁰⁰ Bernasconi, R., 'The Third Party', in Claire Elise Katz (ed.) *Emmanuel Lévinas: Critical Assessments of Leading Philosophers*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2005, vol. I).

⁴⁰¹ Derrida, J. 'Violence and Metaphysics', in *Writing and Difference*, 2001 (1967), pp. 79-153.

anarchic logic of the face-to-face (an-archic because not submitted to the laws of time, narrative and the locus of being) to the third, and the unavoidable synchrony of the narrative. There is just as much tyranny involved in leaving ethics to itself as there is, in Lévinas's famous phrase, in leaving politics to itself.

If, in *T.I.*, 'Politics left to itself bears a tyranny within itself; it deforms the I and other who have given rise to it, for it judges them according to universal rules, and thus in absentia',⁴⁰² it could be argued, following the above analysis, and Lévinas's insistence, in *O.B.*, on stressing the necessity of the Said and politics, that it would also be 'tyrannical' to leave ethics to the self-sufficient realm of the relation between 'me' and the Other, before the third raises a question, for justice, for me. Of course, inasmuch as the third has been shown to already be there in the eyes of the other, the other-within-the-self of *O.B.*, the interruption of the ethical by the political has already occurred.

The Mutually-Interruptive Realms of Ethics and Politics

That the categories of ethics and politics are mutually interruptive is usually taken to be Jacques Derrida's thesis, which he develops amply in much of his work. A careful consideration of the above, however, leads to a different conclusion: that of the basis for a mutual interruption being already within the work of Lévinas's, and further developed by Derrida in innovative and equally controversial ways. One notion in particular stands apart in continuing Lévinas's otherwise conservative construal of being-with through *fraternity* and *primary* sociality: the notion of *community of singularities*. Like the Lévinasian *primary sociality* and *fraternity*, the notion is constructed through the interplay of separation and participation, at the base of which lies a paradox pertaining to much of Anglo-Saxon philosophy attempting to reconcile universality and its application, ethics and its implications for the political: a 'comparison of incomparables'.⁴⁰³ Community of singularities formulates an apparent paradox, bringing together the non-identical structure of singularity and the opening onto the sphere of justice that community and the third bring. The focus is shifted from the gap between ethics and politics, to the *aporetic* structure of being in common. I shall return to the aporetic in the following chapter.

Without elaborating the Derridean notion of the *aporetic*, suffice it to say that, in its etymology derived from the Ancient Greek, *aporia* stands for undecidability. For singularities to be

⁴⁰² Lévinas, *T.I.*, *op. cit.*, p. 300.

⁴⁰³ Lévinas, E., *Paix et Proximité*, Emmanuel Lévinas, *Les Cahiers de La Nuit surveillée*, ed. Jacques Roland, (Lagrasse: Verdier, 1984), p. 345; trans. Peter Atterton and Simon Critchley, 'Peace and Proximity', *Basic Philosophical Writings*, *op. cit.*, p. 168.

genuinely singular, they cannot be described as anything else that would compromise that singularity. They are, in a Lévinasian sense, unknowable and unsayable, unrecognisable and unutterable. For, at the very moment of inscription into the violent *logocentric* structure of speech, they would be compromised, closed within a system. As soon as any singularity is identified as such, it has to be, even in a minimal sense, like something (else); it must to be inscribed within a logic of relationality.

The Derridean aversion to the positive account of community/being-in-common is then rightly informed by a worry that without the assumption of radical difference, the risk is posed for the construction of a “shared identity” within which difference would be obliterated, a quasi-totalitarian philosophic-political framework oblivious to the ethical demands of the other. The development of this notion is a project for a study in and of itself. What I have tried to emphasise is, firstly, the continuity between Lévinas’s works spanning most of his writing career, with respect to conceptualising a being in common, something denied by many theorists, sympathetic or not to his project. Additionally, and crucially, as I hope, by now, is apparent, the roots for a being in common inscribed within the Derridean notion of community of singularities are to already be found in Lévinas’s notions of *fraternity* and *primary sociality*. The proposition that the notions of fraternity and primary sociality are forerunners to the notion of community of singularities is based on an understanding of these notions as already containing within them the paradox that the compound notion ‘community of singularities’ emphasises: that of the coexistence of singularity and plurality (the ‘we’) within one term.

A corollary of the above discussion about the place of the third in Lévinas’s work is also that, contrary to most accounts, the political is not a late interest for Lévinas, nor is it a marginal one but was, instead, present from the beginning of his philosophical career, and an indispensable part of his whole philosophical project. The third, and the notion of community of singularities, developed from Lévinas’s primary sociality and fraternity, thus provide a strong link between all of Lévinas’s major works, in his exploration of the ethical and the political.

IV. Derrida

This chapter engages with the clarification and analysis of a series of term ‘couplets’ in Derrida’s work, through an engagement with *Politics of Friendship* (henceforth, *P.F.*): singularity and community, friendship and democracy, and ethics and politics. Recent works exploring these dyadic formulations and the relationship between them include Simon Critchley’s ‘The Other’s Decision in Me’.⁴⁰⁴ Critchley follows Derrida’s argument on democracy-to-come and the ‘new international’ along the axis of a ‘repoliticization of Marxism’.⁴⁰⁵ He assumes the trace of Lévinas in Derrida, but does not attempt to clarify the relation between the Lévinasian terms behind Derrida’s analysis and Derrida’s *own* reformulations and reframing of the questions raised.

In what follows, I shall attempt to clarify that relationship and argue that, unless one understands the torsions that Lévinasian concepts undergo in Derrida’s hands, one cannot appreciate the directions that Derrida’s and Lévinas’s own works point us in. Due to his understanding of Derrida’s works as lacking a positive political layer,⁴⁰⁶ Critchley proceeds, here and elsewhere, to posit his own work as a ‘political supplement’.⁴⁰⁷ Derrida otherwise pursues the question of politics in relation to the concepts of democracy-to-come and the ‘new international’ in ‘The Other Heading’.⁴⁰⁸ Since this text is specifically engaged with the question of Europe, we shall not follow it within this study.

The final part of this chapter will consist of a discussion of the question of ‘the animal’ in Derrida, to which the Lévinasian and Derridean notions I have been developing throughout this study, of the third, the other-within-the-same, and the third-in-the-eyes-of-the-other-within-the-same lead us. The animal, developed through various Derridean figures, including that of ‘beast’

⁴⁰⁴ Other recent works exploring these dyadic formulations and the relationship between them include Simon Critchley’s ‘The Other’s Decision in Me’ in *Ethics, Politics, Subjectivity* (London and New York: Verso, 1999), p. 283.

⁴⁰⁵ Simon Critchley ‘The Other’s Decision in Me’ in *Ethics, Politics, Subjectivity*, *op. cit.*, p.283.

⁴⁰⁶ As opposed to deconstruction being implicitly political, in its practice.

⁴⁰⁷ See his conclusion ‘Five Problems in Lévinas’s View of Politics and the Sketch of a Solution to Them’, in *Political Theory*, (2004), Vol. 32, No. 2, pp.172-185, and ‘Post-Deconstructive Subjectivity?’, in *Ethics, Politics, Subjectivity*, *op. cit.*, pp. 73-77, as well as Simon Critchley, *Infinitely Demanding: Ethics of Commitment, Politics of Resistance* (London and New York: Verso, 2007).

⁴⁰⁸ Jacques Derrida, *The Other Heading*, trans. Michael Naas (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992).

emerges as the necessary breach within the very definition of human subjectivity. Both human and animal are subjected, in Derrida's analysis, to the logic of the trace, which doubles both and inscribes them into a necessary form of community, of being with-the-other-other-than-human. I first follow the logic of the animal through the analysis of *Politics of Friendship*, where it does not appear as an explicit, separate analysis, but to which Derrida alludes and towards which his work necessarily moves. I then take up the question of the animal explicitly through and analysis of Derrida's *The Beast and the Sovereign*.⁴⁰⁹

Throughout this chapter, I will aim to follow the trace of Lévinas throughout the texts and reveal the Lévinasian concepts of the other-within-the-same and the third to underscore the conceptual structure of Derrida's argument. The first half of this chapter will focus on *P.F.*, though *Points...*⁴¹⁰ and other works will also surface as alternative places for the argument, or, indeed, places where Derrida continues the argument opened by *P.F.* Though the analysis will be underscored by these oppositions, which turn out not to be oppositions at all, I will also be focusing on the relation between other sets of terms: friend and enemy, the human Other and the non-human Other, the brother and the feminine, and law and justice. I will also develop the argument through other concepts, some of which are encountered in Derrida's text only as allusions to other Derridean works. All of these concepts are complex structures, all of which Derrida assumes familiarity with. I shall offer explanations and definitions as these terms arise. They are: *différance*, iterability, undecidability, trace, secret, aporia, supplement, messianic and the spectre. Throughout, I shall be using both the terms Other and other, the former of which will be in keeping with Lévinas's understanding of the human other who faces me, whilst the latter will either be the vernacular understanding of other, or Derrida's rendition of it as 'other' in citations.

I argue that the Lévinasian concepts of the third and asymmetry within the ethical relation, as well as the relationship between ethics and politics developed in his later work, *Otherwise than Being*, underlie the entire analysis in Derrida's *Politics of Friendship*. A corollary of the main argument will be that within *Politics of Friendship*, the Lévinasian concepts of the third and

⁴⁰⁹ Derrida, Jacques *Séminaire: La bête et le souverain*, vol. 1: 2001-2002, ed. Michel Lisse, Marie-Louise Mallet, and Genette Michaud (Paris: Galilée, 2008), trans. Geoffrey Bennington as *The Beast and the Sovereign*, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009) and Derrida, Jacques *Séminaire: La bête et le souverain*, vol. 2: 2002-2003, ed. Michel Lisse, Marie-Louise Mallet, and Genette Michaud (Paris: Galilée, 2010) trans. Geoffrey Bennington as *The Beast and the Sovereign*, vol. 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011). Cited by volume and page of the English edition, and by the French edition pagination in brackets.

⁴¹⁰ Jacques Derrida *Points... Interviews 1974- 1994* ed. Elisabeth Weber, trans. Peggy Kamuf and others [Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1995 (1992)].

other-within-the-same undergo various transformations, leading to the development of the 'friend' in *P.F.* In spite of the acknowledgement, by various commentators, of the Lévinasian resonances in Derrida's text,⁴¹¹ the relation between Lévinas's concept of the third, the other-within-the-same and Derrida's concept of the friend remains unexplored in detail. *P.F.* is generally recognized as belonging to that body of Derridean works which overtly deals with 'the political', in a manner which was difficult to dismiss even for those committed to reading Derrida's work as political quietude.⁴¹² At the same time, the relation between Lévinasian concepts and *P.F.* has remained largely unexplored.

Otherwise than Being is the main work to which Derrida's *P.F.* is indebted, in spite of the formal organization of the text around Montaigne's, Kant's, Nietzsche's, Schmitt's and Blanchot's works. Lévinas is finally named, as the answer that was always there, underscoring the analysis, at the end of *P.F.*, as 'the third reliable friend' of Blanchot and Bataille, who 'was there from the beginning [of the analysis]'.⁴¹³ *P.F.* is thematically organised⁴¹⁴ around the 'question of the question', taken up in relation to Heidegger and the question and Lévinas's concept of the Other as question, analysed in Chapter One and Two, respectively. The question of community is evinced as the always already given response, in responsibility, to the call of the Other. The 'common' of the community understood as a being-in-common is not a 'bridge' at all, but the 'pole end or the end of a call'.⁴¹⁵ This leads to the somewhat surprising conclusion that in *speaking* community, we 'speak', we answer the Other's demand, call to responsibility. Community is responsivity and it is shown to always have been there. For an understanding of how this comes to be the implicit conclusion of Derrida's text, for he never pauses to explain, but rather, follows Lévinas's own textual torsions, one must closely engage with Derrida's weaving of Lévinas's concept throughout his text. *Politics of Friendship* is construed, in Lévinasian spirit, as a tireless opening and reopening of questions, a quasi-phenomenological perspective shift in following the trace of the argument. Indeed, one is left with the impression

⁴¹¹ See, e.g., Diane Perpich 'Universality Singularity and Sexual Difference: Reflections on Political Community', in *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, June 2005, Vol. 31, No. 4, pp. 445-460.

⁴¹² See Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* (New York, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (1999)).

⁴¹³ J. Derrida, *P.F.*, *op.cit.*, p. 293.

⁴¹⁴ The matter of 'thematic' analysis in Derrida is, of course, a complex one, requiring scrutiny in its own right. The use of terms such as 'thematic' do not do justice to the spectral arrangement of the text, whereby different themes come to circle and haunt one another throughout the book. I shall, however, for the purpose of clarity, be referring to it as such, at this point. The notion of spectrality will be analysed below, in relation to friendship.

⁴¹⁵ Derrida, *P.F.*, *op. cit.*, p. 297.

that Derrida would insist on opening and reopening the question of friendship *ad infinitum*, were it not for the need for it to settle, temporarily, into a Said. And it is, precisely, the relation between the Saying and the Said which underpins the construal of his analysis as responsivity.⁴¹⁶

Throughout *P.F.*, Derrida raises various concerns, related to the thinking of being-with beyond conceptual couplets such as universality and particularity. There seems, as alluded to above, to be an underlying commitment to keeping all questions open, in a manner reminiscent of the concerns raised in his early engagement with Lévinas in *Violence and Metaphysics*, and his texts on Heidegger, analysed above, in Chapter One. This is suggested by the very organization of the text around the purported question-statement addressed to the other by Aristotle ('O my friends, there is no friend'⁴¹⁷), of which Derrida provides an in-depth analysis throughout. This could be read as continuing Derrida's engagement with the question of writing, formally construed as an address to the Other.⁴¹⁸ Derrida's engagement with the question through the Aristotelian address to the Other recalls Lévinas's own.

One difficulty in engaging with *P.F.* as a text *on* Lévinas arises out of the fact that it is mainly organized around an explicit engagement with other philosophers. However, as we shall see, Derrida's interest in the above writers seems to be marked by a Lévinasian-informed concern with reconceptualising the dyad between universality and politics, with a specific focus on concepts such as distance, respect, and dissymmetry. The conceptualization of the friend as organized around and dependent on the concept of *hostis*, or enmity-within is structured around the Lévinasian concept of the other-within-the-same. Otherwise put, the trace of Lévinas underscores the entire text. Lévinas could be said to be, for Derrida, the friend that never was present within the pages of the text. If Lévinas, as set out in Chapter Two, makes an almost seamless transition, in *O.B.*, from the other-within-the-same to the third-in-the-eyes-of-the-other-within-the-same, showing the third to always have been there, Derrida follows a similar analytical arc in evincing the third party as that which enables, according to the logic of supplementarity,⁴¹⁹ the face-to-face. The 'relation to the singularity of the other also passes

⁴¹⁶ I undertake a close analysis to the relation between the Saying and the Said in Chapter Two.

⁴¹⁷ Derrida, *P.F.*, *op.cit.*, p. vii, *passim*.

⁴¹⁸ The roots of this can be traced to *Of Grammatology*, in spite of the book being formally construed around the question of language. [Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1997)].

⁴¹⁹ Briefly, the supplement is that which is excluded from a structure but defines it, intrinsically. Derrida applies the logic of supplementarity to many of his concepts, including democracy and writing. [See Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1997)].

through the universality of law'.⁴²⁰ And it is the third party as a 'third instance' to which the face-to-face appeals, and, in a sense, already has, 'beyond the face-to-face of singularities'.⁴²¹

If Lévinas's differentiation between law and justice is often implied, and the transition from political community to universality is often insufficiently spelt out, Derrida has been explicit, throughout his work, in setting out the differences between concepts such as law and justice, universality and community⁴²². The rhythm of *P.F.* is therefore more paced in the transition to the concept of the third as representative of politics within ethics, and assumes knowledge of the analyses and differences between concepts Derrida has pursued elsewhere, often referring to them as such.

Derrida's interest in the concept of the friend seems to be grounded in a Lévinasian-informed impetus to move beyond the dyadic relation between ethics and politics, universality and singularity, coupled with a preoccupation with questioning the usefulness of largely neglected, but philosophically- and culturally- ingrained concepts such as friendship for 'us', 'now'. With *P.F.*, Derrida aims to rethink what he calls the 'phallogocentric schema of fraternity',⁴²³ beyond the impasse into which it is locked. Phallogocentrism is one of the terms Derrida employs, like fratrocenrism, fratro-phallogocentrism and others, to mark out the historical movement by which a term (here, friendship) comes to be inscribed within a hierarchical system whereby it excludes that which is essential to its very definition. Thus, fratrocenrism refers to the 'gathering' of community around the idea of a community of brothers. Logocentrism, analysed in *Of Grammatology*⁴²⁴ and other places, refers to the dominance of *logos* in the Western philosophical tradition. Related to this definition is phallogocentrism, a combination of phallocentrism and logocentrism, which recalls the misogynistic construction of community around the core of the exclusion of the feminine. In what follows, I will be focusing on Chapters Eight, Nine and Ten of *P.F.*, that is, 'Recoils', 'In Human Language, Fraternity' and 'For the First Time in the History of Humanity', respectively.

⁴²⁰ Derrida, *P.F.*, *op.cit.*, p.276.

⁴²¹ Ibid.

⁴²² See, e.g., *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, [London: Routledge, 2001 (1994)], and 'Force of Law', which sets out the aporetic structure between law and justice [Jacques Derrida, 'Force of Law', trans. Mary Quaintance, in Drucilla Cornell, Michael Rosenfeld and David Gray Carlson, eds., *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice* (New York: Routledge, 1992)]. Very schematically, the distinction is between law, which encompasses right and can be understood in the narrow sense, and justice, which is always to-come, never present.

⁴²³ Derrida, *P.F.*, *op. cit.*, p. 263, *passim*.

⁴²⁴ Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, *op. cit.*

One of the central question opened by *P.F.* is the question of democracy and what political system would be appropriate for a relation to the Other grounded in Lévinasian ethics. The guiding thread or the problem orienting Derrida's analysis and the present chapter, as it guided our analysis of Lévinas's works in Chapter Two, will be the chiasmus opened between singularity, understood as the ethical relation to the Other as absolute difference, and universality, which requires the passage through law of that relation. Derrida expresses this conundrum through his engagement with the idea of democracy-to-come.⁴²⁵ 'There is no democracy without respect for irreducible singularity or alterity, but there is no democracy without the "community of friends", writes Derrida, community which implies the "calculation of majorities", and identifiable, stabilisable, representable subjects, all equal.'⁴²⁶

The Question of the Friend, the Friend as Question

One schema which follows the Lévinasian relation between symmetry and dissymmetry is that of love (*philia*) and friendship. In the 'Recoils' chapter of *P.F.*, following the designation of love as belonging to the sphere of dissymmetry and friendship to the realm of reciprocity, we find an analysis of the third party as always already there, evoking Lévinas's own concept of the third-in-the-eyes-of-the-other-in-the-Same. As in the analysis of the question, in Chapter One, Derrida's own analysis of friendship in 'Recoils' follows the same structure of the Greek notion of *philia* and the question, as Heidegger had also done in *B.T.*, in the existential analytic's interrogation of the question of Being. The analysis of *philia* guides the entire analysis. Derrida is, however, adamant that what he is undertaking is not a rewriting of *philia*, or, for that matter, of the question of the question.⁴²⁷ In spite of this, the understanding of what the question constitutes emerges altered from Derrida's analysis.

For Derrida, the question, the friend and similar concepts collapse the classical 'to', 'from' and 'about' structure of the question into one, or, rather, different layers of the same notion, in that the notion of the other-within-the-same brings forth all three layers. The question is always addressed to the Other, comes to *me*, faces me, in the form of an ethical demand or prayer *from* the Other and engenders a response *in spite of me*. The other-in-the-same as discourse is the

⁴²⁵ As is well-known, Derrida engages with this question directly in *Of Hospitality* and *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*. [J. Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, trans. M. Dooley and M. Hughes (London, New York: Routledge, 2001) and J. Derrida, *Of Hospitality*/Anne Dufourmantelle invites Jacques Derrida to Respond, trans. R. Bowlby (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2000)].

⁴²⁶ Derrida, *P.F.*, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

⁴²⁷ Derrida, *P.F.*, *op. cit.*, p. 299 ff.

very possibility of there being any question at all. It forms the *about* of the question, regardless of the actual content. In this sense, Derrida's analysis of the concept of the friend as question could be taken to also follow the spirit of Lévinas's distinction between the Saying and the Said, the designation of the Saying, put very briefly, as the quasi-transcendental condition for the possibility of any Said.⁴²⁸ Derrida locates what he calls the chiasmus between the interjection in the canonical version of the question/ exclamation 'O my friends, there is no friend!' and the 'recoil' version, the assertion, 'reportive-type declaration' or '*constatif*' that is '*O my friends, there is no friend*'.⁴²⁹

It is within this chiasmus, or what I have earlier called spacing, that what we might call the Saying of the Aristotelian address occurs, beyond the Said. Put differently, and in the context of the above discussion on the skewing of the classical logic of self-identity that Lévinas's philosophy generates, the spacing between the two versions of the Aristotelian question/assertion *collapses* the question and answer of the address to the friend. That is, both on a formal level (the chiasmus between the assertive/recoil version and the classical/canonical level) and, on a content level (what the address to the friend *says*), a space is opened up from the inside of the equation through the figure of the Other as friend. Moreover, the assertion/address is 'rended', split from the inside by the collapse of the question/answer contradiction of the two assertions/exclamations (O my friend, there is no friend). The above contains within it both the element of the address *to* the Other, coming *from* the Other as demand to respond responsibly to the contradiction and is *about* the Other as absence/presence. It is precisely within this spacing that Derrida's concept of the 'politics of friendship' emerges. There is a reader or an auditor to whom every question is addressed, on which it depends for its very existence, bringing with it, in the collapse of the questioning levels of to/from/about, a minimal community of friends, a 'minimum of friendship', or a 'minimal consensus' of friendship or community in language.⁴³⁰

What is precisely of interest to us is the chiasmus that the call structure introduces between the two versions. If the interjection of the canonical version launches a call which cannot be reduced to a report, the articulated phrase as a whole comprises, includes, clasps, a reportive - type declaration, 'O my friends, *there is no friend*'.⁴³¹

Crucially, the Other as spacing rends the assertion/question/address from the inside *as temporality*, since it is, on the formal level, *through time* that the spacing occurs between the

⁴²⁸ The spirit, as opposed to 'the letter' of Lévinas's writings, which not even Lévinas follows, according to the logic of the unfaithfulness to the Saying of the Other that the Said engenders.

⁴²⁹ Derrida *P.F.*, *op. cit.*, p.213.

⁴³⁰ Derrida, *P.F.*, *op.cit.*, p. 214.

⁴³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 213, emphasis in the original.

two versions. In this sense, Aristotle's purported assertion or question-that-perhaps-never-was addressed 'friends'-who-were-present-or-perhaps-not, in a future never present. This future is the one in which we, as Derrida's readers of Aristotle's address, encounter it. The question, for Derrida, is always, as it is here, also subject to the altering logic of undecidability (also referred to as the perhaps) whereby it remains perpetually open: the content, addressee, or sender is never identified as such. What is important is that the call, the question, the demand to respond comes from the Other, and is always addressed to *me*. At the same time, the call is marked by the fact that it singularises the one to whom it is addressed. As for Lévinas, the self is a self only insofar as it is always subjected to the crushing demand to respond and the knowledge that this responsibility is not one which can be deferred or relinquished.

'We wish only to recall, in order to appeal to them, the two great destinies of the sentence, destinies in which necessity and destination, the law and the other, strike up *an alliance*'.⁴³² 'The first destiny: however it is read, in the canonical or recoil version, and whoever its author, such a sentence is addressed to someone. The fact that this is absolutely necessary does not prevent – on the contrary, it commands – that the task of determination or identification of this addressee remains unfulfilled and always exposed to some undecidability. This is analytically inscribed in its event, as well as in its structure'.⁴³³ And secondly, another "destinerrancy" (...) an address would have to be *each time one single time*, and all iterability would have to be excluded from the structure of the trace.'⁴³⁴

An address, that is, must always be 'addressable' and addressed to someone. This is, of course, the structure of what Derrida had earlier called writing and *différance*, the welding, or coexistence of repeatability (iterability) and the irreplaceability of the singular. It is, in fact, a structure which underlies most Derridean concepts throughout his writings, but is always faithful, in its unfaithfulness, to the spirit of Lévinas's work. What is crucial to note about Derrida's analysis after the above point is, however, the readiness with which the 'third party' is introduced into the scene.⁴³⁵ Otherwise expressed, the third is shown, as in *O.B.*, to always already have been there, 'in the eyes of the Other' as Lévinas would put it,⁴³⁶ or, as Derrida

⁴³² What I above called a 'collapsing' of the question and answer, or the different layers of the question. Derrida, *P.F.*, *op. cit.*, p.214.

⁴³³ What I have earlier called the formal and the content structure of the address. *Ibid.*, p.215.

⁴³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.215.

⁴³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.215. Derrida seems to use the terms third party and third interchangeably throughout *P.F.*, or perhaps under the presumption that one is already familiar with Lévinas's formulation and understanding of the third party.

⁴³⁶ Lévinas, *T.I.*, *op. cit.*, p.213.

puts it, ‘the third party is there (...) as the enemy within’,⁴³⁷ whereby the enemy is the very possibility of the friend, the distancing at the heart of the subject. The third party, in Derrida’s *P.F.* is therefore structured in the same way as *différance*, *aporia* and what Derrida calls, in *Rogues*, ‘figures of the unconditional without sovereignty’.⁴³⁸ Briefly, *aporia* is, like undecidability, a term Derrida employs to examine the ‘moments within a text that undermine its apparent coherence or stability and result in an impasse’.⁴³⁹ The aporetic dislocates the dyadic set of terms we have been exploring thus far.

Derrida explicitly refers to hospitality, the gift or forgiveness as ‘figures of the unconditional without sovereignty’.⁴⁴⁰ However, I believe the case could convincingly be made, as I have suggested above, that several, if not most of Derrida’s concepts/figures subscribe to the same logic of the unconditional without sovereignty, ‘including messianic without messianism’.⁴⁴¹ Like Lévinas’s concept of the third as the opening of the question of the political, Derrida’s third party as the ‘one *qua* more than one’⁴⁴² also seems to bring to mind the previously-explored concept of the third-within-the-eyes-of-the-other-in-the-same. According to Derrida, it ‘simultaneously allows and limits calculability’, that is, opens the question of the political as well as limits it, standing witness to a ‘singular multiplicity’ which always prevents the friend from being only one.⁴⁴³

The third as multiplicity, as the always already political friend, breaching the ethical dyad of self and Other⁴⁴⁴, is the kernel of Derrida’s interpretation of Aristotle’s statement/question as a declaration (‘against a backdrop of multiplicity’), that ‘there is no friend, that is, there is never

⁴³⁷ Derrida, *P.F.*, *op. cit.*, p. 216.

⁴³⁸ Jacques Derrida, *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*, trans. P. Brault and M. Naas (California: Stanford University Press, 2005) p.149. I shall not be pursuing this analysis in this study, as it requires a detailed study in its own right.

⁴³⁹ Christopher Norris, ‘Metaphysics’, in Jack Reynolds and Jonathan Roffe, eds. *Understanding Derrida* (London and New York: Continuum, 2004), p. 20.

⁴⁴⁰ Derrida, *Rogues*, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

⁴⁴¹ Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International* (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 181.

⁴⁴² Derrida, *P.F.*, *op.cit.*, p. 215.

⁴⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 215.

⁴⁴⁴ Cf. ‘And one is already more than one, with or without my consent. I want this and I do not want it. I do not want it because the desire for a unique friendship, an indivisible bond, an “I love you” one time, one time, one single eternal time, one time for all time(s), will never cease’ (*P.F.*, p. 215). Of course, the point here is not the volition or the will of the self at all, but the fact that *desire*, within the self-Other relation tends towards the comforting one-to-one, hermetic sphere of the dyad, even though, as it turns out, the third and universality, are, as with Lévinas, always there, breaching the dyad, *in spite of me*.

only one friend, or ‘there is never a sole friend’,⁴⁴⁵ a *solus ipse*. ‘The third is both ‘singular and plural’, ‘multiple’, a ‘singular indivisibility’,⁴⁴⁶ the enemy-within ‘in the place of the friend’, in a formulation which, again, resonates with Lévinas’s third-within-the-eyes-of-the-Other: ‘(...) It is here, preeminently, that the enemy is within, in the place of the friend. Friend and enemy take up their places in taking the place of the other, one becoming, prior to the slightest opposition, the ambiguous guardian, both the jailer and saviour of the other.’⁴⁴⁷

Following the evincing of the third party as always already there, breaching the duality of the friend-couple, Derrida continues on what seems to be a similar path to Lévinas in *T.I.*, and aligns love (the couple) with a tendency towards asymmetry, and friendship with a desire tending towards reciprocity. At the heart of friendship, that is, is a

force of the improbable [that which can never be, *as such*]: the *phenomenon* of an appeased symmetry, equality, reciprocity, between two infinite disproportions, as well as between two absolute singularities; in the case of love, it would raise or rend the veil of this phenomenon, (some would even be tempted to say that it would reveal its hidden, forgotten, repressed truth), to uncover the disproportion and dissymmetry as such.⁴⁴⁸

Community in Alteronomy

However, and in keeping with later Lévinasian analyses in *O.B.* which breach the layers between self-Other through interiority, Derrida then seems to reach a conclusion whereby both phenomena, both forms of being-with (love and friendship) are revealed to be marked by dissymmetry, in that the call, the demand, putting singularity in question, is always marked by an ‘infinite disproportion’, ‘whether or not the other answers’⁴⁴⁹. ‘This disproportion is indeed the condition of sharing, in love as well as in friendship.’⁴⁵⁰ In the always already being-answer of the question, in being addressed by the Other, something akin to community arises, *in spite of me*, in spite of the subject’s ‘freedom’, also placed in question. The address of Derrida’s writing, through Aristotle’s address, performs that which has otherwise risen argumentatively, eventually, too late, as Derrida would put it. This freedom which emerges out of my being

⁴⁴⁵ Derrida, *P.F.*, *op.cit.*, p.215 f.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid., p.216.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid., p.216.

⁴⁴⁸ Derrida, *P.F.*, *op.cit.*, p.220. Derrida continues to undermine the appearance of any phenomenon as such.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid., p.220.

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid., p.220.

called to responsibility by the other-within-me is what I would like to call alteronomy. The term suggests, through the Latin ‘alter’, the always-already there of the other-within and eschews the dyadic oppositions between autonomy and heteronomy.

The following chapter, ‘In Human Language, Fraternity’ shifts the focus onto what was earlier called ‘minimal community’. The title seems derived from the understanding of language in the wider Lévinasian sense of discourse *as being addressed*, called to responsibility, placed in question by the Other (whether in interiority or exteriority). The focus, here, though following the same analytical arc, but presenting another side of it, is on the rewriting of the concept of autonomy which occurs in being addressed by the Other. ‘We are caught up (...) in a sort of hereteronomic and dissymmetrical curving of social space – more precisely, a curving of the relation to the other: prior to all organized *socius*, all *politeia*, all determined “government”, before all “law”’.⁴⁵¹ The ‘necessary violence’⁴⁵² of politics, of being-with more-than-one which breaches ethics and the couple is at work here, too, rewriting the classical, Western philosophical concepts of freedom and autonomy. Being-with-one is already being-multiple, as Derrida’s analysis reveals, following Lévinas.⁴⁵³

Teleiopoetic Friendship

The question of numbering, of numerability, or calculability is another spectre which haunts the analysis from the start, in a further argumentative arc drawn around the question of singularity. For, it is in the instability of the answer to the question ‘who’, that is, the ‘who’ of the address,⁴⁵⁴ that the multiple within singularity arises. As with difference, the question from the Other must have the element of iterability inscribed within it, the ‘non-assurance’⁴⁵⁵ of the recipient of the address as much as it must address a singularity. Having problematised the destabilising core at the heart of friendship and the Greek notion of *philia*, that of dissymmetry,

⁴⁵¹ Ibid., p.231.

⁴⁵² Ibid., p.231.

⁴⁵³ I have addressed the reasons why Derrida’s understanding of the self as multiple, or the many-within-one should not be understood as in line with Nancy’s or Blanchot’s descriptions of it (Jean-Luc *Being Singular Plural*, trans. Robert D. Richardson and Anne E. O’Byrne (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000) and Maurice Blanchot, *The Unavowable Community*, trans. Pierre Joris, Barrytown, (New York: Station Hill Press, 1988). See my Introduction for an elaboration on this point. Derrida’s explicit reasons for not ‘putting his name down’ to community as understood by Nancy and Blanchot also surface through the analysis in the present chapter.

⁴⁵⁴ Derrida, *P.F...*, p. 220.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid., p.220.

separation and infinite distance that the other-within-the-Same represents, Derrida turns to evincing democracy-to-come as the political form of being-with demanded by the ‘infinite heterogeneity’ and ‘dissymmetrical curving’ of the concept of the ‘minimal community’ of singularities. The democracy-to-come is what is demanded by the curving within the social caused by the other-within-the-Same as friend. It is the necessary and compelling curvature of being-with that exceeds instantiation of any being-with as such, at the same time as calling for it. ‘This democracy’, writes Derrida, ‘would free a certain interpretation of *equality* by removing it from the *phallogocentric* schema of fraternity’.⁴⁵⁶ Democracy-to-come is a concept Derrida introduced in *Spectres of Marx*⁴⁵⁷. *P.F.* extends the development of the notion to democracy-to-come as the political heart of the ethical notion of minimal community of singularities, through a deconstruction of the notion of friendship.

Captured within the positing of the question of friendship, of a being-with under the name of friendship, is the discursive determination of a being-with through the demand of the Other upon me, the call to responsible responsivity. The implicit demand of the prayer towards the self from the Other is that *I* (the *me*) should assume the possibility of a being-with under the name of friendship, whilst never instantiating it as such, whilst holding it at bay as a friendship-to-come. This is a responsibility I have already assumed, by being *me*, through singularisation, through being called to responsibility by the other-within-the-self determining singularity.

‘Messianic teleiopoiesis’ is the term Derrida employs as the structure, both temporal and spatial, of the following prayer/call/demand: ‘You-my-friends-be-my-friends-and-although-you-are-not-yet-my-friends-you-are-already,-since-that-is-what-I-am-calling-you’.⁴⁵⁸ Naming thus simultaneously singularises and creates a community of singularities. It *performs* subjectivity in the same movement in which it appeals to its constantly future-directed transformation. The term teleiopoiesis is an amalgam of the Greek notions of *télos*, suggestive of teleology, *poesis* (‘poetics’, though the Ancient Greek term means ‘to make’)⁴⁵⁹ and *tele-*, alluding to technics, and bringing to mind the machine-like iterability of *différance*.

Teleiopoetic friendship consists in acknowledging, *in the name of friendship*, that ‘if there is indeed a promised friendship, alas, “there is no friend”’.⁴⁶⁰ If there ever is a messianic *teleiopoetic* promise of friendship-to-come, it can only be one that ‘we’ must not cease to be striving for. Not one friend is a friend yet and never could be, through the very structure of

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid., p.232.

⁴⁵⁷ J. Derrida, *Spectres of Marx*, *op. cit.*

⁴⁵⁸ J. Derrida, *P.F.*, *op. cit.*, p.235.

⁴⁵⁹ Oxford English Dictionary, Second Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 520.

⁴⁶⁰ J. Derrida, *P.F.*, *op. cit.*, p. 235.

friendship as being-with, as being-with-many-at-the-heart-of-being-with-one. Friendship is, again, marked out, although not explicitly named so (as in *Rogues*)⁴⁶¹, a figure of the unconditional without sovereignty, as an allusion to it, in the form of 'sovereign master friendship'.⁴⁶²

⁴⁶¹ Derrida, *Rogues*, *op. cit.*

⁴⁶² J. Derrida, *P.F.*, *op. cit.*, p.236.

Bringing a Brother Back

This friendship-within, that is the quasi-transcendental condition for the possibility of friendship, or the other-within-the-Same-within-the-me is also another reason Derrida could not and does not 'put his name down' to Blanchot's and Nancy's usage of the phrase 'community without community'.⁴⁶³ The latter two formally structure the question of community around the x without x schema that is, according to Derrida, a schema Nietzsche had already called for.⁴⁶⁴ The Nietzschean 'yes, yes', the affirmation prior to statement or question is otherwise another formulation of the same previously-mentioned reticence of Derrida's to state a determined position on community. It is precisely because the affirmation must remain 'risky, threatened, open',⁴⁶⁵ that the path opened by Nancy and Blanchot with *The Unavowable Community*⁴⁶⁶ and *Being Singular Plural*⁴⁶⁷ cannot be followed. Derrida makes what seems to be another reference, through Schmitt, to Nancy's collaboration with Lacoue-Labarthe, also, in *Retreating the Political*,⁴⁶⁸ in writing that we could 'resituate the concept of the political'.⁴⁶⁹ Theirs are enquiries he could never follow. In the aporetic neutralising of one predicate by another (x without x), the writing of a community crossed-through, they are still appealing to the same motifs of 'communal' values, to being-in-common. Every work on community attempting to 'build' on the concept 'risk(s) bringing a brother back'.⁴⁷⁰ Of course, the question of community of singularities is the subject of the present study. However, Derrida's questioning of the concept of community and fraternity leaves open the question of what a community would be called and what kind of politics it would entail. This would be the subject of another possible study.

⁴⁶³ We have already seen why this might be the case in the Introduction.

⁴⁶⁴ Derrida quoting Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, in Derrida, *P.F.*, *op. cit.*, p.295.

⁴⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 244.

⁴⁶⁶ M. Blanchot, *The Unavowable Community*, *op. cit.*

⁴⁶⁷ Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, *op. cit.*

⁴⁶⁸ Nancy and P. Lacoue-Labarthe, *Retreating the Political*, *op. cit.*

⁴⁶⁹ Derrida, *P.F.* *op.cit.*, p. 244.

⁴⁷⁰ Derrida, *P.F.*, *op. cit.*, p. 298 f.

Assuming the Risk: The Writing of Community

P.F. as well as the present study are open to an acknowledgement of the risk entailed in opening the question of community in the first place, in writing it. It does so by tracing the work of Lévinas throughout *O.B.* and the enquiry into the question of friendship. Unlike Nancy's work, Derrida's community 'passes through' the much more exigent language of Lévinasian ethics and inscription of the self-other relation, which marks it with a heightened awareness and attention to the torsions that the history of the concept performs. The risk of recalling that very history and 'bringing a brother back'⁴⁷¹ is a risk that, nonetheless, Derrida assumes, as do I, in this study, under the mark of necessity. The development of the question of community beyond the fraternal, beyond virility and beyond the human would call for 'yet another language',⁴⁷² perhaps even otherwise than human. This would mean following the concept of unconditional hospitality to its limit, as Derrida alludes to in *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness* and *Points*.⁴⁷³ This question will be revisited below.

Otherwise than *Comme-un*,⁴⁷⁴ or Beyond Community

The manner in which Derrida resituates the concept of the political and the community of singularities, which holds within it the tension between universality and particularity, is not only by tracing, as he has done throughout *P.F.*, the genealogy of fraternity through the 'canon' of various works on friendship, thus deconstructing the concept and exposing it as always-already based on fraternity, but also by showing the deconstruction of the concept to already have been under way.

Friendship is shown to always have been both a relation of distance, respect, reciprocity and symmetry and, concomitantly, a relation of absolute proximity through interiority, through the Lévinasian concept of the other-within-the-Same, destabilising symmetry from the core. This

⁴⁷¹ Ibid., p. 298.

⁴⁷² Derrida, *P.F.*, *op.cit.*, p.299.

⁴⁷³ Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, trans. M. Dooley and M. Hughes (London, New York: Routledge, 2001), J. Derrida, *Of Hospitality/Ane Dufouoromantelle invites Jacques Derrida to Respond*, trans. R. Bowlby (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2000).

⁴⁷⁴ The play on the Anglo-French wording of community as *comme-un* [as-one], as differentiated from the *commun* [the common], is an allusion to Jean-Luc Nancy's play on the term, in *The Inoperative Community*, *op. cit.*, p. 25, *passim*.

same concept of the other-within-the-Same is shown, with Lévinas, as with Derrida, to be one problematised by the third party, who is shown to always have been there as a dissymmetric element, throwing the reciprocity of the self-Other relation out of the hermetic dyad towards which it tends. The third party in Derrida ‘always witnesses a law that comes to interrupt the vertigo of singularity or dual’ and ‘come[s] (...) always from the singularity of the other’⁴⁷⁵. Lévinas, as we have seen in Chapter two, traces the different sides of the same analysis: that of the evincing of war, at the bottom of peace, with *T.I.*, and peace at the bottom of war with *O.B.*

The Enemy at the Heart of the Friend

P.F. seems, initially, to follow the arc drawn by the analysis of *T.I.*, through the concepts of the enemy at the heart of friendship (which seem to possess a similar structure to Lévinas’s concepts of war and totality at the heart of infinity). The enemy is shown to be the very condition of the possibility of the friend, closer to the self-other relation in which a third is always already there than the dual model of friendship between two brothers. As he concludes, in relation to Nietzsche’s Zarathustra⁴⁷⁶, ‘if you want a friend, you must wage war on him, and in order to wage war, you must be capable of it, capable of having a “best enemy”’. As a consequence, and in keeping with the logic of the gift as that which must be unfaithful, least thankful to the sender/giver⁴⁷⁷, Aristotle’s appeal to the other, to his ‘friends’, present or not, becomes a plea, for Derrida,, through Nietzsche, ‘more friendly, more declared and avowed in its friendship’: ‘O, enemies...’⁴⁷⁸. The concept of *f(r)iendship*, as the enemy-within-the-friend, who is also other than human, is something I would like to suggest as a possible way of thinking the friend as the enemy-within, beyond humanist limitations. I shall return to *f(r)iendship* below.

The Friend at the Heart of Enmity

Returning to the double bind mentioned above, a further move is performed as soon as any stability appears to have settled into the understanding of the concept of friendship as enmity-within (enmity as structurally similar to the destabilising force of the other-within-the-Same). Friendship is shown, again, to be at the bottom of enmity. Since enmity, like friendship, is always already political, any understanding of either as a quasi-transcendental condition for the

⁴⁷⁵ Derrida, *P.F.*, *op.cit.*, p. 276, f.

⁴⁷⁶ ‘At least be my enemy!’ (Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, trans. Common, Thomas (Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 1997), cited in J. Derrida, *P.F.*, *op. cit.*, p. 280 ff.

⁴⁷⁷ Cf. ‘One would have to think the dissymmetry of a gift without exchange’ (Ibid., p. 286).

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 282.

possibility of the Other (both of which Derrida follows and shows, analytically, at different points in his study) would be insufficient. They are each the quasi-transcendental condition for the possibility of the other concept.

Lévinas, too, oscillates between the two sides of the analysis throughout his works, and sometimes, as with *O.B.*, within the same work, as, for instance, with the shifting perspectives within the analysis of the Saying and the Said. Derrida performs both moves consecutively, and would continue to do so, *ad infinitum*, were there not the necessity of the Saying, as for Lévinas, having to settle, for the time being, into a Said. As soon as one proposition has been stated, the question of the other and the Other as question is posed. One instance of this is the following, in which, crucially, Derrida also refers to the Heideggerian ‘voice of the friend’, as the very possibility for the opening of the question:

It is perhaps in a region (...) withdrawn from metaphysical subjectivity that for Heidegger “the voice of the friend” rings out. The issue is perhaps what we were calling above a minimal “community” – but also incommensurable to all others, speaking the same language or praying, or weeping, for translation against the horizon of a sole language, if only to manifest a disagreement: friendship prior to friendship. One would have to add: ‘prior to enmity’.⁴⁷⁹

As stated above, the tracing of the concept of the ‘voice of the friend’ throughout *B.T.* and its relation to the question of Being and the call of conscience is not an analysis undertaken within this study. This was justified, as we saw earlier, both through the unstable nature of the relation between the call of conscience with the voice of the friend within Heidegger’s *B.T.*, and the acknowledgment of Derrida’s proclivity for undertaking an in-depth analysis of otherwise marginal concepts within a particular philosopher’s work and showing them to have been central to the very understanding of the work.

Derrida’s suggestion in the first part of the above citation seems to be that, were the question of the ‘gathering of friends’ ever to arise, it could not do so within the gathering of the question of Being, that is, in the context, the *milieu*, of the commonality of language, in which *philia* is subsumed to *logos*. Moreover, an analysis of the question of the friend could never attempt, as he understands Heidegger’s existential analytic to do, to ‘get behind’ the subject (that is, the notion of the self), anthropologically-determined or otherwise. Derrida stands, instead, with Lévinas, in the positing of a temporary commonality, at this very moment,⁴⁸⁰ and for one

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 244.

⁴⁸⁰ My reference is to Derrida’s work ‘At this very moment, in this work, here I am’, a key moment in his encounter with Lévinas’s philosophy and his response to Lévinas’s ‘Wholly Otherwise’ (Jacques Derrida,

moment only, of a being-together that ‘allocution presupposes’, that is, speech understood in the Lévinasian sense of Saying, but also as a Said, as a shared language, ‘past or to come’.⁴⁸¹

What Derrida calls ‘a sort of friendship’ is sealed ‘before all contracts’, as justice is set up as the destabilising force at the centre of law. Unlike Nancy and Blanchot, Derrida insists on the holding open of the question of community. For him, even the minimal instantiation of a community which, in Blanchot’s work, for instance, is deemed ‘unavowable’, is a step too far. He stresses, in what follows, ‘the avowed’ at the bottom of the unavowed of the community, in a direct reference to *The Unavowable Community*⁴⁸²:

We would not be together in a sort of minimal community – but also incommensurable to all others – speaking the same language or praying for translation against the horizon of a same language, if only to manifest disagreement, if a *sort of friendship* had not already been sealed, before all contracts; if it had not been avowed as the impossible that resists even the avowal, but avowed still, avowed as the unavowable of the “unavowable community”: a friendship prior to friendships (...).⁴⁸³

He/ She/ /Me – The place of Woman in Fraternity

*‘The remaining question – (...) not “what is friendship”, but who is the friend? Who is it? Who is he? Who is she?’*⁴⁸⁴

The analysis of the address of the ‘O my friends (...)’ Aristotelian remark/question is opened, also, in the same movement as the singularisation of the friend. In other words, singularity or the self is such that it can never be addressed without the gendered inference of his or her name, of him or her as *me*. In spite of the fact that the conditions for such an analysis can already be found within Lévinasian pages,⁴⁸⁵ the subject, this subject or the subject as gendered, is never overtly addressed by Lévinas. Derrida’s motivations for addressing the phallogocentric roots of the concept of friendship are not simply a matter of his political concerns, but stem from the very fabric, or structure of the concept of the singular *as the self addressed* in an unsubstitutable manner by the Other, what Lévinas calls *me*. Schematically put, what Derrida calls the

‘At this very moment in this work here I am’ and Emmanuel Lévinas ‘Wholly Otherwise’, in Robert Bernasconi and Simon Critchley, eds., *Re-Reading Lévinas*, *op cit.*

⁴⁸¹ J. Derrida, *P.F.*, *op.cit.*, p.236.

⁴⁸² Blanchot, *The Unavowable Community*, *op. Cit.*

⁴⁸³ Derrida, *P.F.*, *op. cit.*, p. 236.

⁴⁸⁴ Derrida, *P.F.*, *op.cit.*, p.292.

⁴⁸⁵ We have seen how this might be developed in Chapter Two.

phallogocentric roots of friendship refers to the organization of human community around the fraternal figure of the brother, the 'sublime figure of virile homosexuality',⁴⁸⁶ which is inherently male and marked by desire, marked by a tendency of friendship to 'accede' to the erotic relation of the face-to-face.

The history of human community and friendship, human community *as* friendship between brothers, has been marked by a double exclusion, according to Derrida, the exclusion of the woman from the midst of the brotherhood, and the exclusion of friendship between women. He follows this throughout the canon of works he analyses, in Michelet, Kant, Nietzsche and Blanchot, though we shall not be pursuing the argument through an engagement with every author. They shall be referred to, in turn, as they have been so far, following the arc of the analysis around friendship. In this section, the possibility of the third as woman is raised. The concept of woman surfaces, in Derrida's text, as he otherwise reveals it to surface in all of the authors' works with which he engages, as the very possibility of friendship, the excluded middle, supplement, or third without which the brothers would not form a brotherhood. The feminine also complicates, as a third within the face-to-face of brothers, the relation between ethics and politics. Since the concept of woman is always already political, but assigned to the space of domesticity throughout the 'ethico-political-philosophical discourses on friendship',⁴⁸⁷ it generates a tension at the heart of being-with, at the heart of ethics.

Feminine Supplementarity

Throughout *P.F.*, and through an engagement with Michelet's and Nietzsche's works, Derrida has critically outlined the phallogocentric roots of the concept of fraternity, as written on the condition for the possibility of exclusion. The founding of political communities on similarity or symmetry excludes difference, by definition. Derrida's analysis, however, goes further into evincing the concept of woman as the disruptive force within community or fraternity.⁴⁸⁸ Michelet, for instance, in his exclusion of woman from the concept of fraternity ('She can spell the sacred word of the new age, *Brotherhood*, but she cannot yet read it',⁴⁸⁹) marks the concept of woman as the disruptive and necessary element at the heart of brotherhood/fraternity and law. Derrida's analysis again deploys the Lévinasian concept of beyond, understood, here, as the quasi-transcendental condition for the possibility of law and fraternity. In being 'a law beyond

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid., p.279.

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 278 f.

⁴⁸⁸ This is also the trajectory of Derrida's analysis in the earlier *Nietzsche's Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles*, trans. B. Harlow (Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press (1978, 1979).

⁴⁸⁹ Michelet, cited in J. Derrida, *P.F.*, *op.cit.*, p.238.

the law',⁴⁹⁰ woman is shown to undo the concept. She is simultaneously the incalculable at the heart of community as fraternity and friendship as fraternity, and the calculable (that which counts and which is counted), and represents the 'excess' of the notion, the 'spilling into' the beyond of the being of fraternity, the inassimilable (in that she is by definition incommensurable with the idea of a 'brother') and that which determines assimilation in the first place. 'Woman, eternal irony of the community',⁴⁹¹ is the condition for the possibility of singularisation, the 'mechanism of hyperbolization',⁴⁹² the mechanistic iterability that is at the bottom of concepts such as *différance* in other places and fraternity and friendship in *P.F.*

Literal and Strict Friendship

My use of the terms fraternity, friendship and brotherhood has been based on their almost interchangeable meaning. Like most of Derrida's concepts, they are complex structures which do not subscribe to a literal meaning. As a general rule, however, fraternity is analysed *qua* the 'dominant schema of friendship' and imports or transports⁴⁹³ all of its contradictions into that general schema. Moreover, there is a distinction drawn by Derrida between the literal sense of a thing and what he calls the strict sense. The strict sense would correspond to something akin to the 'narrow' or 'weak' understanding of a thing, whereas the literal would correspond (though not exactly) to the 'wider', 'loaded', or 'strong' version of the same concept. Friendship in the strict sense is that which adheres only to the friendship or the community of brothers, 'caught up in the bonds of fraternity',⁴⁹⁴ whilst the literal sense is something which 'never was', that is, was never present and never will be, *as such*. This is due, as mentioned above, to the structural openness of the concept towards its own futurity, or becoming-otherwise, its aporetic structure.

'In Human Language, fraternity' also refers, throughout, to Heidegger's question and the call of conscience, his 'meditation on friendship' through what Derrida had analysed, earlier, as the

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 239.

⁴⁹¹ Derrida quoting Hegel, *ibid.*, p. 239.

⁴⁹² Ibid.

⁴⁹³ Ibid., p. 240.

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 240. The double meaning of bonds is of note, here, as both 'something which binds' and the allusion to the financial sense of a bond. This is something Derrida has also analysed elsewhere, starting with *Spectres of Marx*, *op. cit.* and culminating with *Given Time*, more recently. See J. Derrida, *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money* (1991), trans. P. Kamuf (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994) and J. Derrida and L. Venuti 'What is a Relevant Translation?' *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (Winter, 2001), pp. 174-200.

‘voice of the friend.’⁴⁹⁵ The concept of the voice of the friend performs the same torsions of meaning, the same steps that the concepts of woman and friendship have been subject to, in the above analysis. In Heidegger’s *Geschlecht IV*,⁴⁹⁶ the ‘voice of the friend’, tentatively connected, here (‘perhaps’), with the ‘voice of consciousness’ (*Gewissen*) is conferred a ‘special ontological status’.⁴⁹⁷ In Derrida’s *P.F.*, of course, the voice of the friend does not hold a special ‘ontological’ status, but something akin to a quasi-transcendental status,⁴⁹⁸ since it structurally recalls Lévinas’s concept of the other-within-the-self, concept which, as we have seen, guides the entire analysis of *P.F.* Recalling his earlier, différance-like, meditations on the voice of the friend, the question and the call of conscience, Derrida then proceeds to the suggestion that the voice of the friend is always the voice of the foreigner.⁴⁹⁹

The voice of the friend is marked, in Heidegger’s text, and according to Derrida, by uncanniness (*Unheimlichkeit*⁵⁰⁰). Therefore, what Derrida ‘hears’ in the concept is the structure of différance, the welding of undecidability with regards to the ‘sender’ of the message, or the origin of the call of the Other, in Lévinasian terms, with the *directedness* of the message (the fact that, in the call of the Other, it is always *me* who is addressed and, in a sense, has always already answered). This ‘voice of the friend, which every Dasein always carries (*trägt*) with it’ is the call of the Other, the demand or prayer issuing *from* the Other, calling the self to responsibility and singularising it, in the same step. It constitutes, again, the quasi-transcendental condition for the possibility of friendship, in that it, too, subscribes to the same skewed logic of temporality and the rewriting of the concept of singularity: it is both anterior and posterior, both ‘interior and coming from without’.⁵⁰¹

The very possibility of the question, in the form “what is...?”, thus seems, from the beginning, to suppose this friendship prior to friendships, this anterior affirmation of being-together in allocution.⁵⁰²

This logic of the subject, ‘rended’, split from within by the concept of the other-within-the-Same, affects, in essence, speech as such, and disrupts the hierarchical positioning of *logos* as

⁴⁹⁵ Derrida refers us to his earlier reading of the ‘voice of the friend’ in *Geschlecht IV*, *op. cit.*, in a footnote (J. Derrida, *P.F.*, *op.cit.*, p.241 and 269, n. 17.).

⁴⁹⁶ Heidegger, *Geschlecht IV*, *op. cit.*

⁴⁹⁷ Derrida, *P.F.*, p. 241.

⁴⁹⁸ This is due to Derrida’s reticence about using terms like ontological.

⁴⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 241.

⁵⁰⁰ Heidegger, *B.T.*, *op.cit.*, §58.

⁵⁰¹ Derrida, *P.F.*, *op.cit.*, p.241.

⁵⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 249.

the ‘gathering of the One’.⁵⁰³ This is an allusion to Heidegger’s gathering of the question of Being and its disclosure.

The ‘answer’ to Heidegger’s question of the meaning of Being is thus revealed not as Dasein, but as the-other-within-the-Same, disturbing subjectivity from interiority. And it is revealed so through time as a modality, the future anterior which is ‘the very movement and time of friendship’, encapsulated in Aristotle’s apparently paradoxical ‘O my friends, there is no friend’.⁵⁰⁴ Animating the temporal torsion at work here, *performing* it, is precisely Lévinas’s concept of asymmetry, of the asymmetrical relation to the Other, whether conceptualised as interiority or exteriority.

There is no respect, as its name connotes, without the vision and distance of a *spacing*. No responsibility without response, without what speaking and hearing *invisibly* say to the ear, and which takes time. The co-implication of responsibility and respect can be felt at the heart of friendship, one of the enigmas of which would stem from this distance, this concern in what concerns the other: a respectful separation seems to distinguish friendship from love.⁵⁰⁵

The phrasing of ‘takes time’ in the above citation connotes both a temporal notion and holds within it Derrida’s concept of the gift: the Other not only *gives* time to me, in that he or she inscribes the subject into temporality through singularisation, but also *takes* time from me, in an *in spite of me* that reframes the question of freedom. The question, in Derrida’s analyses, is always one of accent, of punctuation, or placing the gravity of the sentence on either side of the point, in order to flesh out the complexity of a notion for which there is never one ‘reader’, never one perspective. The analysis is otherwise punctuated with the notion of the gift, as that which the friend as other ‘gives’, as world-giving.⁵⁰⁶

The latter part of the citation analysed above inextricably connects respect with responsibility, as asymmetry comes to characterise the notion of friendship. Distance, as emphasised throughout this chapter, is of interest to Derrida within the works of Kant (‘perfect friendship’),⁵⁰⁷ friendship as indicative of a ‘morally good will’⁵⁰⁸, Aristotle (friendship as

⁵⁰³ Ibid., p. 242.

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 249.

⁵⁰⁵ Derrida, *P.F.*, *op. cit.*, p. 252.

⁵⁰⁶ Cf. ‘A friend who does not give you *the* world, gives you nothing’ and ‘the gift is that which gives friendship; it is needed for there to be friendship, beyond all comradeship’ (Ibid., p. 284, 295).

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 254.

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 249.

grounded in virtue, *proté philia*⁵⁰⁹), Montaigne, and Nietzsche ('star friendship'⁵¹⁰) since it opens precisely the possibility for justice, and the political from interiority, insofar as it is intrinsic to the notion of friendship. With 'a respectful separation' distinguishing friendship from love, Derrida has located friendship at the junction of the political and the ethical⁵¹¹ and removed it from the trajectory of desire which always tended towards love, with notions of friendship belonging to 'the canon'.⁵¹²

If classical androcentric friendship tended, in desire, towards the other as myself, and flourished in proximity, the friendship arising on the hither side of this analysis is one grounded in something akin to the Lévinasian notion of the third-within-the-eyes-of-the-Other. Thirdness, an insistent motif in *P.F.*, as we have seen, is what lies at the 'bottom' of friendship according to Derrida's analysis, and introduces, through its very existence, distance, justice and separation into the dyadic relation between self and Other. If classical notions of friendship tended, definitionally, as Derrida shows, towards an eroticized model of mutual givenness, symmetry and hermetic proximity, within which the notion of justice has no place, Derrida's analysis reveals friendship to not only imply spacing, but depend on it. As we have seen in Chapter Two, Lévinas's own model for the one-to-one in the erotic relation evinces the self-Other relation to exclude justice by definition. It is only with the notion of the third, who is finally revealed to always already have been there 'in the eyes of the Other', that there is justice 'for me'⁵¹³.

It isn't only distance, but also *rupture*, or *interruption* that Derrida locates within the philosophies of the canonic works he analyses throughout the text. In a further textual torsion which, once again, reveals Lévinasian 'principles'⁵¹⁴ to always already have been at work within these works, Derrida further distances the concept of friendship from the 'values of proximity, presence, gathering together and communal familiarity'⁵¹⁵ which normally dominate the tradition.

⁵⁰⁹ According to Aristotle's division of friendship into three types (friendship of utility, friendship of pleasure and friendship of the Good), Derrida's allusion is to the highest type, that of friendship of the Good, which is, for Aristotle, grounded in symmetry (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, VIII and IX, 1159a, trans. M. Pakaluk p.102).

⁵¹⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, 'Star Friendship', in *The Gay Science*, cited in Derrida, *P.F.*, *op. cit.*, p. 271, *ff.*

⁵¹¹ 'Neither an ethics, nor a politics' (Derrida, *P.F.*, *op. cit.*, p. 241).

⁵¹² I.e., those philosophers whose works Derrida analyses throughout *P.F.*

⁵¹³ Lévinas, *O.B.*, *op.cit.*, p. 159.

⁵¹⁴ 'Principles' is what Derrida refers to them as (Derrida, *P.F.*, *op. cit.*, p. 255), though, one assumes, not in the usual understanding of them as rigid notions.

⁵¹⁵ Derrida, *P.F.*, *op.cit.*, p.255.

Loveance: ‘A certain Kind of Coming Together in Friendship’⁵¹⁶

Given that, in the canon on friendship, *love* is normally associated by Derrida with the tendency towards the hermetic *proximity* that friendship, as based on the ideal of the couple, exhibits, it is *prima facie* surprising that Derrida performs a further move in the analysis. Always with Lévinas’s model of the erotic relation in mind, Derrida asks the further question:

Why would love be only the ardent force of an attraction tending towards fusion, union, and identification? Why would the infinite distance which opens respect up, not open love up as well? And even more so (...) in loveance (...) the infinite distance in love, a certain kind of coming together in friendship?⁵¹⁷

If love, in Lévinas’s *O.B.*, for instance, and as we saw above, in Chapter Two, normally characterizes the face-to-face relation of the erotic sphere, Derrida removes it, with *P.F.*, and further invests it with the subversive power of the undermining supplement at the heart of the concept. Loveance [*aimance*]⁵¹⁸ is a notion Derrida borrows from Abdelkebir Khatibi’s work,⁵¹⁹ who conceives of love as an address to the Other, under a different name.⁵²⁰ What is crucial for our analysis is that *loveance* is also a term that Derrida uses to describe a being-together, being-with as *otherwise than*, or away from the phallogocentric schema of friendship as fraternity. *Aimance* is ‘indispensable for the naming of a third friend or first voice, the so-called middle voice, on the near or far side of loving (friendship or love), of activity or passivity, decision or passion’.⁵²¹

Though brief, this is a complex passage. It captures, in a schematic fashion, precisely the spacing we have been naming above as created by the third-in-the-eyes-of-the-other-within-the-same, the interruption engendered by the attempt to deconstruct the canonic opposition between activity and passivity, friendship and love, proximity (‘near side’⁵²²) or distance (‘far side’⁵²³).

⁵¹⁶ Ibid., p. 255.

⁵¹⁷ Ibid., p. 255.

⁵¹⁸ Ibid., p. 7 and 25, n. 5.

⁵¹⁹ Abdelkebir Khatibi ‘Dedication to the Upcoming Year’ (Fata Morgana, 1986) in Derrida, *P.F.*, *op.cit.*, p.24 f.

⁵²⁰ Cf., e.g., the presentation of love ‘in two sequences, one addressed to women, the other to men’ (Abdelkebir Khatibi, ‘Over the Shoulder’, Aubier, 1988) *ibid.*, p.24 f.

⁵²¹ Ibid., p. 25, n. 5.

⁵²² Ibid.

As we have seen, these are also themes traversing Lévinas's own writings. The motivation between the somewhat puzzling formulation 'the naming of a third or first voice' seems to be precisely the attempt to 'name', to call upon or designate the middle, the spacing between self and Other that the third creates. The use of 'first voice' seems to be an allusion to what Derrida otherwise refers to repeatedly throughout *P.F.*, the third voice or simply the third as 'first', as enabler of the face-to-face.

Returning to the notion of loveance as being-otherwise-than-friendship, as a modality of the third, Derrida finds support for his hypothesis within Kant's text.⁵²⁴ Thirdness, here, is encountered as 'the friend of man'.⁵²⁵ Derrida's interest in Kant's text, besides the productivity of the notion of distance, or spacing, seems to be that he finds within it the conditions for placing the 'moral principle (...) on the side of (...) love', as opposed to friendship, the latter of which he finds associated, throughout Kant's writings, with virtue, equality, reciprocity, duty and 'painful respect'.⁵²⁶ It is the excess of love, always threatening the limits of the social that creates a rupture at the heart of being-with characterized by a double bind. According to Derrida, it is precisely because of this quality of love as encompassing the double bind of attraction and repulsion that Kant expunges it so violently from the possibility of friendship and locates the moral principle on the side of friendship. This is because love harbours within it the 'enemy' and 'war'⁵²⁷ at the heart of friendship, the possibility of either too much attraction threatening the distance in friendship, or too much repulsion in taking the notion of respectful distance to its logical conclusion of the infinite.

Love, the Enemy of Morality

The epitome of the relation of love to the other person in Kant's text is the figure of 'woman'. For Kant, 'woman' can only be a 'brother for man' through the distance and respect created by 'modesty'.⁵²⁸ And it is precisely this that Derrida finds productive. Love, in Kant's text, is 'the enemy of morality',⁵²⁹ a modality of ethics which is concomitantly the condition for its propulsion along its own axis. Derrida goes as far as comparing the excess of love as the enemy

⁵²³ Ibid.

⁵²⁴ Immanuel Kant, *Doctrine of Virtue, Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. and ed., Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), second part, §46-7.

⁵²⁵ Derrida, *P.F.*, p.255.

⁵²⁶ Ibid., p.255 f.

⁵²⁷ Ibid., p.256.

⁵²⁸ Ibid., p.274.

⁵²⁹ Ibid., p.256.

within the friend to a ‘perversion at the heart of the natural law of attraction and repulsion’ the ‘death instinct or a demonic principle’.⁵³⁰ That is, the supplement, in Derrida, or the third-in-the-eyes-of-the-other-within-the-same, in Lévinas, would concomitantly render friendship a representative of this logic of supplementarity and protect it from it. It is the condition for both its own openness and hermetic closure, and ‘haunts’ virtue as the spectre in the midst of the living.⁵³¹

Kant’s Secret

Another perspective on the same logic of the third at the heart of the face-to-face is conferred by the concept of the secret, which Derrida has analysed thematically elsewhere,⁵³² and which surfaces throughout his writings, either under this name, or as a similar structure. Here, the secret is another term, like loveance, that constitutes a modality of friendship. It is ‘the beginning of friendship’ in the utterance towards the other, the plea, the prayer, to ‘keep the secret’ which is at one and the same time disclosed and occluded. In a further deconstruction of the same universality/singularity, public/private, symmetry/asymmetry set of terms, the secret represents, by definition, the ‘third party’, the ‘N+1’, the excess (like loveance), the ‘impossible and the necessary’, the ‘black swan’ as the brother, as another brother, come to interrupt the dyad of the two friends/lovers and in the same movement propelling friendship along the axis of friendship of a ‘different kind’.⁵³³

In spite of Derrida’s use of the term ‘kind’ here, it should not be understood as exemplary of a genus. As much as it is exemplary, it is also singular in the event of its instantiation. Representative of universality and singularity is the expression the ‘friend of man’ that Derrida finds productive in Kant’s text.⁵³⁴ The third friend breaks the bond between two men, two brothers, with ‘the minor complication of the third man’, the friend *of* man.⁵³⁵ The phrase ‘minor complication’ seems to be an ironic remark recalling Lévinas’s own formulation which designates the third as the problem of justice and the ‘contradiction in the Saying’,⁵³⁶ breaking the self-Other dyad:

⁵³⁰ Ibid., p. 256.

⁵³¹ Ibid.

⁵³² See Jacques Derrida and Maurizio Ferraris, *A Taste for the Secret* (Oxford: Polity Press, 2001).

⁵³³ J. Derrida, *P.F.*, p.259.

⁵³⁴ Ibid., p.260.

⁵³⁵ Ibid.

⁵³⁶ Lévinas, *O.B.*, *op. cit.*, p.157.

If proximity ordered me only to the other alone, there would not have been any problem, in even the most general sense of the term. A question would not have been born, nor consciousness, nor self-consciousness. The responsibility for the other is an immediacy antecedent to questions; it is proximity. It is troubled and becomes a problem when the third party enters.⁵³⁷

The Third Friend of Man

The thinking of the third ‘friend of man’ as the breach between symmetry and asymmetry is the condition for the possibility of ‘cosmopolitanism, universal democracy’ and ‘perpetual peace’, the element without which they could never be announced or promised.⁵³⁸ Friendship *qua* fraternity is, finally, of import to Derrida within Kant’s *Elements of Ethics*⁵³⁹ because it expresses the tension between singularity and ‘human community’⁵⁴⁰ within one term, and thus ‘tells us something essential about ethics’,⁵⁴¹ exposing not only its fratrocentric structure (the human community of friends as brothers), but its mutually-interruptive relation to the political.

Human Fraternisation

‘Humanism has to be denounced, because it is not sufficiently human.’⁵⁴²

‘Humanism is opposed because it does not set the humanitas of man high enough.’⁵⁴³

The history of human community as fraternity holds another double bind of insufficiencies, as the other side of the double bind of excess. In spite of its designation, throughout the canon of

⁵³⁷ Lévinas, *O.B.*, *op. cit.*, p.157.

⁵³⁸ Derrida, *P.F.*, *op.cit.*, p.261. (Derrida is here referring to Kant’s famous *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Essay*, trans. Ted Humphrey (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company Inc., 1983), which he discusses at length in *Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness* (1997), (London: Routledge, 2001).

⁵³⁹ Immanuel Kant *Conclusion of the Elements of Ethics*, in the *Doctrine of Virtue, Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. and ed., Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), second part, §46-7.

⁵⁴⁰ Derrida, *P.F.*, p.262.

⁵⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.262.

⁵⁴² Lévinas, *O.B.*, *op.cit.*, p.127-28.

⁵⁴³ Martin Heidegger, ‘Letter on Humanism’, translated by F. A Capuzzi and J. Glenn Gray, in D. F. Krell (ed.) *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, revised and expanded edition, London: Routledge, 1993, p.251.

works Derrida is questioning, as the representative of the highest universal virtue of respect,⁵⁴⁴ distance and reciprocity, in spite of the underlying assumption, written into its history, that this is the element which *humanises*, Derrida's analysis leads to the conclusion that that fraternisation is not human enough.

Friendship otherwise understood, as breached and broached by the third within the face-to-face of the two 'friends' does not universalise, but singularises. It possesses the structure of iterability, at the same time as emphasising the event of singularisation. This is not a surprising conclusion, and sounds rather close to Heidegger's own declaration in *Letter on Humanism*,⁵⁴⁵ that humanism does not set the *humanitas* of man high enough. Derrida closes his book on a plea for a spectral friendship, a community of singularities as a non-fratrocenic democracy which always will remain to come, whilst being instantiated only for a moment, within the event of striving for it.

I am wondering, that's all, and request that it be asked, what the implicit politics of this language [the language of 'brotherhood'] is. For always, and today more than ever. What is the political impact and range of this chosen word, among other possible words (...)? (...) Is it possible to think and to implement democracy, that which would keep the old name 'democracy', while uprooting it from all these figures of friendship (philosophical and religious) which prescribe fraternity: the family and the androcentric ethnic group? (...) is it possible to open out to the future, or rather, to the 'come' of a certain democracy?⁵⁴⁶

Animality

The conditions for taking the analysis further, into the opening of another question of the community of those otherwise than human, not only otherwise than male and brothers, is there, within the text, as I have shown it to be within Lévinas's own work. Whether because he has pursued it elsewhere,⁵⁴⁷ or because it is still to come,⁵⁴⁸ Derrida does not take up the theme of

⁵⁴⁴ Cf. 'The profound height, the altitude of the moral law of which fraternal friendship would be exemplary – "schematic" or "symbolic".' (Derrida, *P.F.*, *op cit.*, p. 271)

⁵⁴⁵ Heidegger, 'Letter on Humanism', *op. cit.*, p. 251.

⁵⁴⁶ Derrida, *P.F.*, *op. cit.*, p. 305 f.

⁵⁴⁷ See, e.g., Derrida *Points... Interviews 1974- 1994* ed. Elisabeth Weber, trans. Peggy Kamuf and others [Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1995 (1992)].

⁵⁴⁸ See Jacques Derrida *The animal That Therefore I Am* [Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That therefore I Am*, 2008 (2006)]. For the exploration of this question in Derrida's work in detail, see Leonard Lawlor's *This is not Sufficient: An Essay on Animality and Human Nature in Derrida* (New York: Columbia

animality explicitly within the pages of *P.F.*⁵⁴⁹ Derrida's *The Animal That Therefore I Am*⁵⁵⁰ explores the question of the possibility of a 'beyond humanism', or rather, the possibility of a beyond being written into the history and definition of humanism. This work had not yet been written at the time of publishing *Politics of Friendship*, in France, in 1994. It was based on a series of lectures presented in 1997. The theme is also explored in *Points...*, in the chapter entitled 'Eating Well'.⁵⁵¹

Here, Derrida suggests that, although Heidegger's and Lévinas's discourses disrupt what he calls a 'certain traditional humanism', they remain 'profound humanisms *to the extent that they do not sacrifice sacrifice*'.⁵⁵² That is, they do not 'sacrifice' the thought of *not* sacrificing life other than human, or the possibility of something other than human life being *taken*. On Derrida's reading, 'Thou shalt not kill',⁵⁵³ the prohibition to murder that the face of the Other presents me with, tends beyond the human face, faces more than Dasein or human singularity.

Taken through a *tour de force* of torsions of the Lévinasian concept of the other-within-the-same, the Other as animal modifies singularisation through the idea of eating and being eaten, conceived of as gift, and in keeping with the complexities of the gift. The question of living well and even living together, the question of ethics, the question of philosophy, all eventually come to depend on the idea of 'eating well':

The moral question is thus not, nor has it ever been: should one eat or not eat, eat this and not that, the living or the non-living, man or animal, but since *one must* eat, in any case and since it is and tastes good to eat, and since there's no other definition of the good [*du bien*], *how* for goodness' sake should one eat well [*bien manger*]? (...) "One must eat well" does not mean above all taking in and grasping in itself, but *learning* and

University Press, 2007) and Simon Glendinning's *On Being With Others*, the latter of which explores Derrida's work on this theme and others, in relation to Heidegger and Wittgenstein (Simon Glendinning, *On Being with Others*, London and New York: Routledge, 1998).

⁵⁴⁹ Animality should not be understood as a simple reference to the 'animal' as opposed to the 'human', but, as I shall show, as the animal-in-me, recalling Lévinas's concept of the Other-within-the-Same.

⁵⁵⁰ Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, trans. David Wills (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008).

⁵⁵¹ Jacques Derrida, 'Eating Well' in *Points... Interviews 1974- 1994* ed. Elisabeth Weber, trans. Peggy Kamuf and others [Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1995 (1992)].

⁵⁵² Derrida, *P.F.*, *op. cit.*, p. 279.

⁵⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 279.

*giving to eat, learning-to-give-the-other-to-eat. (...) It is a rule offering infinite hospitality.*⁵⁵⁴

The concept of animality as the other-within-the-self, already eaten, and by whom one is always already eaten,⁵⁵⁵ comes to define singularity, comes to condition it. There is, here, as there is throughout Lévinas's work, an identification and also problematisation of the Other with the Good.⁵⁵⁶ 'Eating' does not merely designate the narrow action of nourishment, although, given that, as for Lévinas, ethics for Derrida is always factual and lived, it is a crucial element of the equation. Eating comes to encompass the other-within-the-same as always already 'eaten' and can only exist as an address to the Other, a prayer or a plea through discourse, expanded, here, to include the mouth, the ear and sight as modalities of addressing the Other in language.⁵⁵⁷ Here, again, we find the voice of the friend, mentioned only as the voice hearing itself 'in us, who are therefore before it';⁵⁵⁸ before it, that is, facing it.

Animal Language

Points... also therefore broaches the possibility of the voice of the friend, of the Other facing me, and the other-within-the-Same addressing me in a language other than human. Language is reinscribed within a network of possibilities and necessities that 'mark it from the inside' as iterability, as the trace, and as difference.⁵⁵⁹ If 'man', and especially man as a gendered human animal, is no longer the only being capable of speech and never was, the only horizon within which an enquiry into language other-than-human and language between human animals and other-than can take place is through an engagement with areas other than philosophy.

Derrida briefly raises this point by introducing the possibility of an engagement between the language of philosophy and the language of science, which would take into account genetic coding, for instance.⁵⁶⁰ Theorists like Donna Haraway⁵⁶¹ have criticized Derrida's failure to

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 283 f.

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 283 f.

⁵⁵⁶ For a development of the relation between Plato's idea of the Good and Lévinas's use of it, see Tanja Staehler, *Plato and Lévinas, op. cit.*

⁵⁵⁷ Derrida, *Points...*, *op. cit.*, p. 283.

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 283.

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 285.

⁵⁶⁰ Derrida, *Points...*, *op. cit.*, p. 285.

⁵⁶¹ See Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006). For a study that traces the question of the animal through Derrida and Heidegger's work, see, e.g., Mathew

think a new way of being-with that seriously engages the non-human. Spelling out exactly what a being with the other animal might mean, however, is far more normative than keeping within Derrida's understanding of the limits that engagement with the other, whether human or non-human allows for.

Of course, this particular 'community' does not yet exist, although the raising of the question itself broaches its possibility. Animality is the very opening of community onto its other, the *absolutely* other,⁵⁶² rending the limits of community in the same move as it establishes it, *for the time being*. It also, and in the same arc, draws the possibility of thinking other Derridean concepts beyond the human. The work of mourning, for instance, of mourning something other than the human, is also a conceptual enquiry not yet undertaken, though the possibility for it is, again, within both Lévinas's work and Derrida's,⁵⁶³ were the phrase *autrement que l'être*⁵⁶⁴ to be taken to its own conceptual limits. 'The experience of mourning and promise that institutes (...) community but also forbids it from collecting itself, this experience stores in itself the reserve of another community that will sign, otherwise, completely other contracts'.⁵⁶⁵

F(r)iendship

This enquiry opens a series of other questions, none of which can be answered accurately. What would the possibility of an Other that is otherwise than human mean for Lévinas's ethics of the face-to-face? Would the community of friends who are not necessarily human open to the way to an enquiry into the concept of friendship as *fiendship* [f(r)iendship], as the animal-enemy-within-the-other-that-I-am? Various works have attempted to broach this question in recent years. The field of animal studies is a rich one and it is outside the scope of our enquiry at this

Callarco *Zoographies: The Question of the Animal from Heidegger to Derrida* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

⁵⁶² Cf. 'The absolutely other is the Other (*L'absolument Autre c'est Autrui*)', Lévinas, *T.I.*, *op. cit.*, p. 39, 'The altogether other, and every other (one) is every (bit) other' (Derrida, *P.F.*, *op. cit.*, p.232) and 'Tout autre est tout autre' (Derrida, *P.F.*, *op. cit.*, p. 268, n7, citing Lévinas, in Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, *op. cit.*, pp.82-8.

⁵⁶³ See, e.g., Jacques Derrida 'A Madness Must Watch Over Thinking', in *Points...*, *op. cit.*, p. 355. Derrida has analysed mourning in relation to friendship as singular, the singularity of (human) friendship, in Jacques Derrida *The Work of Mourning*, eds. Pascale – Anne Brault and Michael Naas *Given Time* (London and Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001) and Jacques Derrida *The Gift of Death*, *op. cit.*, are also works in which Derrida analyses the relation between time, memory, undecidability and the other.

⁵⁶⁴ Part of the French title of Lévinas's *O.B.*, *op. cit.* (*Autrement qu'être ou au-delà de l'essence*).

⁵⁶⁵ Derrida, *Points...*, *op. cit.*, p. 355.

point to provide a survey of it. Importantly, much of the work broaching the question of the animal is geared in a direction that, whilst necessary, moves a step too far for a Derridean analysis, i.e. in the direction of the substantive specification for animal rights.⁵⁶⁶ Whilst these are an absolute necessity, it is not my intention to pursue these enquiries here.⁵⁶⁷ Leonard Lawlor's *This is Not Sufficient*, particularly, approaches the dilemma of prescription versus Derridean undecidability in an elegant manner, in setting out 'seven steps' for the treatment of animals, none of which are a facile answer to the conundrum.⁵⁶⁸ David Farrell Krell's *Derrida and Our Animal Others* is unparalleled in its subtle treatment of Derridean themes in *The Beast and the Sovereign*. Krell focuses, however, on Heidegger, whereas my interest is in exploring Derrida's notion of animality and how this relates to the third, in Lévinas.⁵⁶⁹ I will come back to this below. Of note in approaching the question of the animal is also Matthew Calarco's *Zoographies*.⁵⁷⁰ I will briefly address his approach, since it is also through the axis of Heidegger, Lévinas and Derrida that he opens the question. Importantly, he insists on 'doing away with the distinction between animal and human', which is something Derrida does not commit to.

In broaching the animal question, Calarco takes a similar approach in extending Lévinas's ethical thought to its logical conclusion and thus broadening the idea of the other beyond the human. Calarco calls his 'neo-Lévinasian' approach a 'generous agnosticism',⁵⁷¹ in that he insists on the lack of an objective basis on which one might attempt to delineate the difference between human and non-human. Thus, what he proposes is that, in line with Lévinasian ethics as he reads them, the best one can hope for is a 'keeping open' of the exact form this non-human other might take. Whilst he acknowledges the logical absurdity such a conceptual exercise

⁵⁶⁶ I have addressed the question of why Derrida cannot 'put his name down' to a substantive specification of precisely what a community of this sort might look like above, in the Introduction, when placing Derrida's work in the context of Nancy's and Lacue-Labarthe's.

⁵⁶⁷ For a survey of the literature in the field of animal studies and a synthesis of the main approaches to it, please see McCance, Dawne *Critical Animal Studies: An Introduction* (New York: SUNY Press, 2013).

⁵⁶⁸ See Lawlor, Leonard *An Essay on Animality and Human Nature in Derrida* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), pp. 109-110.

⁵⁶⁹ Krell, David Farrell *Derrida and Our Animal Others: Derrida's Final Seminar, 'The Beast and the Sovereign'* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2013)

⁵⁷⁰ Calarco, Matthew *Zoographies: The Question of the Animal from Heidegger to Derrida* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

⁵⁷¹ Calarco, *Zoographies*, *op. cit.*, p. 69 ff.

might engender, he regards such risks as necessary and, indeed, dictated by keeping true to the spirit of Lévinasian ethics.⁵⁷²

In the conclusion to his chapter on Derrida and the book, Calarco points the way to what he takes to be the most radical strain of Derrida's thought on animality: an ontology of animal life, in which the 'human-animal distinction is called radically into question'.⁵⁷³ Calarco remains disappointed, however, with Derrida's not doing away with the human-animal distinction, linguistically.⁵⁷⁴ Derrida's insistence on maintaining the linguistic binary distinction of human-animal is born out of a worry that renaming would elide the history and injustice associated with this distinction. Holding onto it rends open the lacunae of meaning and hierarchical positioning between the terms, pointing to the aporia. Calarco thus focuses on the possibilities for rethinking the human-animal distinction that a disruptive face-to-face encounter with the non-human Other offers. As I hope to have shown in this chapter and will continue to do so in the following section, both Lévinas's and Derrida's work already point the way towards more than the disruption that human subjectivity is faced with, in an encounter with the animal Other. The radical nature of their thought lies in the direction of the development of the other-within as non-human. That is, the challenges to thinking animality are not restricted to a suggestion for the disruptive possibilities in the encounter with a singular non-human Other, but amount to a re-writing of the concept of subjectivity altogether.

The Beast that Regards Us⁵⁷⁵

*'What is the other in me (dead or alive, animate or inanimate) that I want to annihilate so I can finally be myself, alone, sovereign, properly, who and what I am?'*⁵⁷⁶

Derrida explores the question of the animal as beast, in relation to sovereignty and, as I will show, the beginning of a thought on community in relation to the otherwise-than-human, as well as 'thirdness', in his published seminars *The Beast and the Sovereign* (henceforth, *B.S.*).⁵⁷⁷ Held between 2001-2002 and 2002-2003, and published in two volumes under the same title, the Derrida's last seminars address the double exclusion of the sovereign and the animal figures

⁵⁷² Ibid., p. 71.

⁵⁷³ Ibid., p. 141.

⁵⁷⁴ Calarco, *Zoographies*, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

⁵⁷⁵ 'Que l'animal nous regarde', a reference to Derrida's word-play on the animal looking at us and the animal concerning us (Derrida, J. *The Animal that Therefore I Am*, *op. cit.*, p. 372).

⁵⁷⁶ Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign*, vol. 1, *op. cit.*, p. 118 [p. 259]

⁵⁷⁷ Derrida, *B.S.*, *op. cit.*

from humanity's construction of its own subjectivity. The approach to the themes analysed and the 'term couplets' he addresses is similar to the one taken in *The Politics of Friendship*.⁵⁷⁸ The text is otherwise referenced and alluded to throughout Derrida's first year of the seminar, but especially in Seminar Four, which I will focus on.⁵⁷⁹ Derrida addresses and questions sovereignty through various figures of kingship, some animal, some monstrous, including the wolf, the fox, the snake of D.H. Lawrence's poem by the same name, Hobbes's Leviathan, and Schmitt's nation-state. He also extends the question of the other-than-human beyond the conceptual borders of a community of the living, through the figure of the marionette, a figure through which the question of sexual difference is insistently investigated. The question of *la/le* (*la bête et le souverain*) otherwise prefaces and structures the entire first volume of the published seminars, even though not addressed head-on in most of the sessions. Another figure who haunts Derrida's text and is introduced explicitly in Session Four is Lévinas. It is through the prism of the above analysis of 'thirdness' in Lévinas and Derrida, and following Derrida's directly taking up that question of a being-with-the-other-other-than-human in Session Four, that this analysis of *The Beast and the Sovereign* will be taken up.

The second volume of Derrida's *B.S.* is structured around two texts: Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe and Heidegger's 1929-1930 seminar on the animal, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World-Finitude-Solitude*,⁵⁸⁰ where Derrida finds the 'three famous theses' on animality and the world of the animal: 'the stone is without world, [*weltlos*], the animal is poor in world [*weltarm*] and man is world-forming [*weltbildend*].'⁵⁸¹ Since this second volume of *B.S.* focuses mainly on these two texts, I will be focusing on volume one, and especially Sessions Four and Nine, where Derrida investigates the question of being-with-the-other-other-than-human through a Lévinas prism, with an eye to the question of the third, which has been my focus throughout this study. Lévinas's *The Trace of the Other*⁵⁸² is explicitly taken up in Session Four of volume two of *B.S.* However, since this session, like the rest of the volume, focuses on the Heideggerian question of 'world' through Defoe's Robinson Crusoe, and questions, particularly, *apophantic* discourse, in investigating the concept of death 'as such', it will not be

⁵⁷⁸ Derrida, *P.F.*, *op. cit.*

⁵⁷⁹ See, for instance, pp. x, xi, 15, 16, 44, 75, 107.

⁵⁸⁰ Heidegger, Martin *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, trans. Will McNeill and Nicholas Walker (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995).

⁵⁸¹ Derrida's retrospective on his second year of *The Beast and the Sovereign*, cited in Krell, D. F. *Derrida and Our Animal Others: Derrida's Final Seminar, 'The Beast and the Sovereign'* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2013) p. 36.

⁵⁸² Lévinas, 'The Trace of the Other', trans. Lingis, A. in *Deconstruction in Context*, ed. Taylor, Mark (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 345-359.

taken up as a separate analysis here.⁵⁸³ Session Five of the second volume of *B.S.*, investigating the figure of the corpse as ‘the thing’ also points the analysis in interesting directions, insofar as the being-with-otherwise-than-living-creatures and responsibility is concerned. This, however, exceeds the scope of this analysis, since, to reiterate, my focus throughout this study has been on the questions of community, friendship and the Lévinasian third as the juncture between ethics and politics. I will now turn to Session Four, in which Derrida’s analysis of Lacan through a Lévinasian lens reveals a new direction for thinking community beyond the human.

How the animal Feigns the Feint

*‘The bear’s concentration added to my loss of composure. I alternated thrusts and feints; I sweated, in vain! Like the finest fencer in the world, the bear met and parried each thrust, but he did not respond to feints; (no fencer in the world could have matched him in that). Eye to eye, as if he read my soul, he stood with his paw lifted, ready to fight; and if I did not intend my thrust, he remained immobile.’*⁵⁸⁴

What concerns Derrida in Session Four of *B.S.* is the concept of *semblable* (fellow) and Lacan’s insistent attribution in *Écrits*⁵⁸⁵ of the capacity for cruelty to the human being only, which places him, for Derrida, in the canon of Cartesian philosophers who deny the animal features ‘proper’ to the human being: language, reason, the capacity to die and to respond to the other and exteriority, mourning. Whilst restricting the capacity for cruelty to the human is meant, for Lacan, to undermine the primacy of the subject who is, in the final analysis, subject to the signifier, it also serves as a sovereign mark, a mark *of* the sovereign, in that it also places the human above the animal, thereby conferring onto it responsibility and, with it, responsivity. Derrida focuses on Lacan’s ‘The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious’,⁵⁸⁶ in which Lacan insists on maintaining the distinction between human and animal, as Lévinas has also done, and Derrida has also been accused of, as we shall see.⁵⁸⁷

Working against the Freudian complication of the human-animal distinction, Lacan casts the human subject as an animal, yet an animal that is prey to language. This passivity would so far

⁵⁸³ See Session Four, *B.S.*, vol. 2, *op. cit.*, pp. 93-118 [pp. 145-177].

⁵⁸⁴ Kleist, Heinrich von ‘On the Marionette Theatre’, in Kleist, Heinrich von *Selected Writings*, trans. David Constantine (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2004), p. 414.

⁵⁸⁵ Jacques Lacan, *Écrits* (Paris, Seuil, 1966), trans. Bruce Fink, as *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, New York, Norton, 2006), p. 120.

⁵⁸⁶ Lacan, *Écrits*, *op. cit.*, p. 671-703.

⁵⁸⁷ This is an accusation that Matthew Calarco makes in his *Zoographies*, *op. cit.* I will return to why, for Derrida, maintaining the linguistic distinction, without the respective canonical attributions is a necessity.

be rather close to what Derrida might have in mind in complicating the Lacanian schema, were it not for the fact that Lacan does not stop there. The mirror stage, a compensatory structure for the human being's vulnerability in the context of its world, is also what confers onto it its sovereign status. The human being, according to Lacan, can flexibly respond, as opposed to rigidly react to its environment, as animals do. Lacan's thesis is here similar to Lévinas's, whose 'Ego and Totality',⁵⁸⁸ as we have seen above,⁵⁸⁹ sketches precisely this difference between responsivity and reaction, the fundamental difference between human beings and animals, respectively. Derrida responds to both, by complicating the schema. The powerful dyadic structure of rigidity and flexibility, with its correspondence to the non-human and the human, respectively, is something Derrida comes back to with the figure of the marionette. It is crucial to point out, at this stage, that what Derrida means to achieve is not the reversal of the response-reaction schema, thereby including animals in a human category capable of death, response, concern for the other, etc. His concern, and the guiding thread for the seminar in its entirety, is the following:

Once more, it is not a question here of erasing all the difference between what we call *reaction* and what we commonly call *response*. (...) My reservations bear solely on the purity, the rigor, and the indivisibility of the frontier that separates reaction from response, already in the very expression 'we human beings'; consequently they bear above all on the purity, rigor, and indivisibility of the concept of responsibility—and thus on the concept of sovereignty contained in it.⁵⁹⁰

Therefore, it is not that he means to 'erase' the lines between the human and the animal, as commentators have charged him with doing,⁵⁹¹ but rather, to question that which has been cast, in the canon of Western philosophy, as 'proper' to the human:

The point would be to elaborate another 'logic' of decision of decision, response, event – as I also try to deploy it elsewhere and which seems to be less incompatible with what Lacan himself, in 'Subversion of the Subject...', says of the code as 'code of the Other'. Meaning that other from whom the 'subject receives even the message he emits'.⁵⁹² This axiom ought to complicate any simple distinction between *responsibility* and *reaction*, with all its consequences. And so the point would be to reinscribe this *différance* of

⁵⁸⁸ Lévinas, 'The Ego and the Totality', *op. cit.*

⁵⁸⁹ See my Chapter Two, above, p. 55 ff.

⁵⁹⁰ Derrida, *B.S.*, vol. 1, *op. cit.*, p. 118 [p. 168].

⁵⁹¹ See Calarco, Matthew *Zoographies: The Question of the Animal from Heidegger to Derrida* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), p. 143.

⁵⁹² Derrida citing Lacan, 'Subversion of the Subject...' in *Écrits*, *op. cit.*, p. 807 [p. 683].

reaction and response and thereby this historicity of ethical, juridical or political responsibility into another thinking of life, living beings, into another relation of the living to their ipseity, and thereby to their supposed sovereignty, their *autos*, their own autokinesis, and reactional automaticity, to death, to technique, or to the machinic.⁵⁹³

What troubles Derrida about the schemata of response-responsivity and Lacan's (as well as Heidegger's, as he points out)⁵⁹⁴ assignation of it to the animal and the human respectively, is, aside from the implications it has for our ethical relation to animals as beings in the world other-than-human, the fact that Lacan, Heidegger, et al., base their conceptions of the subject on precisely this erroneous schema.⁵⁹⁵ In it, Derrida has shown, what is presupposed as being 'proper to man' does not pertain to it and constitutes a questionable basis for the relation of sovereignty that humanity has established to those it has designated as its others. In addition to the schema of responsivity, Derrida questions another conceptual distinction, also Lacan's, in the same work: the capacity to feign feint, or, rather, double feint. Derrida quotes Lacan:

Let us observe in parentheses, that this Other distinguished in place of Speech, imposes itself no less as witness of Truth. Without the dimension that it constitutes, trickery in speech would not be distinguishable from mere feint, which, in combat or sexual display, is however very different.⁵⁹⁶

Recalling his analysis of the prince and the fox in Machiavelli, where the prince is a fox feigning not being a fox, something that an actual fox, according to Lacan, could never do, Derrida sets out to demonstrate not merely that the fox can, indeed, feign feigning, and also, crucially, that both subjects, animal and human, are subjected to the same structure of the trace which effaces itself. At stake is, again, the question of the animal, which emerges in Lacan's work as the difference, the dividing line, between feint and trickery, and, with it, the question of the subject, the human subject, and what is proper to it. The Levinasian questions of response, responsivity and ethical responsibility to the Other guide Derrida's analysis. The movement of the demonstration employs and deploys Levinasian thought on the Other against and towards the dividing line between the human and animal, performing a phenomenological arc that brings us back to questions of community and the third-in-the-eyes of the other as other-than-human.

Derrida focuses on the stark dividing line that Lacan draws between the 'innocence' of an animal that cannot lie, cannot trick, and cannot, in a hunt, feign a feint, efface its tracks, deceive

⁵⁹³ Derrida, *B.S.*, vol. 1, *op. cit.*, p. 120 [p. 170].

⁵⁹⁴ Derrida, *B.S.*, vol. 1, *op. cit.*, p. 121 [p. 171], *passim*.

⁵⁹⁵ Derrida, *B.S.*, vol. 1, *op. cit.*, p. 119 [p. 169].

⁵⁹⁶ Lacan, *Écrits*, vol. 1, *op. cit.*, p. 807 [p. 683], in Derrida, *B.S.*, *op. cit.*, p. 121 [p. 171].

a tracker, and the human subject, who, for Lacan, is capable of all that the animal is denied.⁵⁹⁷ Crucially, and importantly for our analysis, as we have seen above with the difference between response and reaction, killing and cruelty, Lacan places the human in a place of ‘lack’. The human is subject to the master signifier, an ‘infirmity’ the animal does not suffer from.⁵⁹⁸ The gesture is parallel to the one Lévinas effects in ‘The Ego and the Totality’, as I have shown above.⁵⁹⁹ The living being, alive as ‘fullness’, is only capable of being breached by exteriority before its death. That which pierces its self-enclosed existence also kills it. The human, by contrast, has the capacity to be breached and broached by exteriority as otherness, and to respond to it.⁶⁰⁰ Both gestures, Lacan’s and Lévinas’s, place the human in a place of vulnerability, a passivity that the animal is not capable of sustaining whilst alive. However, as Derrida points out, ‘what the animal lacks is precisely the lack in virtue of which man is subject to the signifier, subject subjected to the sovereign signifier. But being subject to the signifier is also to be a subjecting subject, a *master* subject (...).’⁶⁰¹ The designation is crucial, since it is here the passage from the animal to the human that returns Lacan to the anthropocentrism that is required in his schema, in the passage from the imaginary to the symbolic, in which the animal is insistently and consistently aligned with the imaginary, ‘trapped in the imaginary’.⁶⁰² For Lacan,

Speech begins with the passage from feint to the order of the Signifier and that the Signifier demands an other place – the place of the Other, the other witness, the witness Other than any of the partners – so that the Speech that it supports can lie, i.e. posit itself as Truth.⁶⁰³

This ascension to the order of Speech and Truth is crucial not only because it places the animal, dogmatically, in a place ‘other than the human’, subjected to the human, but also because it reveals the tenuous structure upon which Lacan’s theory of the subject is based, and, for Derrida, as we have seen, upon which the whole of the Western philosophical canon is based. It is also crucial because it is here, in the analysis of the unquestioned ascension of the human to sovereignty, that we find Derrida’s direct reference to Lévinas and the ‘third’, the ‘other of the other’, along with whom the ‘order of politics’ is ushered in. As I have shown in Chapter 2, in

⁵⁹⁷ Derrida, *B.S.*, vol. 1, *op. cit.*, p. 125 [p. 175], *passim*.

⁵⁹⁸ Derrida, *B.S.*, vol. 1, *op. cit.*, p. 125 [p. 175].

⁵⁹⁹ See my Chapter 2, above.

⁶⁰⁰ Lévinas, ‘E.T.’, in *Collected Papers*, *op. cit.*, p. 25 ff.

⁶⁰¹ Derrida, *B.S.*, vol. 1, *op. cit.*, p. 125 [p. 175].

⁶⁰² Derrida, *B.S.*, vol. 1, *op. cit.*, p. 122 [p. 172].

⁶⁰³ Lacan, ‘Subversion of the Subject’, in *Écrits*, *op. cit.*, pp. 807-8 [pp. 684-685].

Lévinas's *O.B.*, the third is shown always to have been there, 'in the eyes of the Other'.⁶⁰⁴ In two dense paragraphs Derrida performs the same move, a move that the entire session has been moving towards. Through the figure of 'the trace', or 'the feint', the animal's alleged inability to efface its own tracks, according to Lacan, he 'sets the scene' for the encounter between the hunter and the hunted, the human other and the animal Other, and reveals the other to both, the third, to always have been there, not merely in the system of language in which the human takes part, but also the animal. The two, beast and sovereign, are shown to both be subject to the same order of the self-effacement of the trace, which doubles their movements and their 'ability' to feign a feint, in that the first feint, the primal one in the language of psychoanalysis, has already performed itself. The first paragraph, and the most important with reference to Lévinas, where we find the most direct references, is in parenthesis. This is precisely where, for Derrida, the supplement, that which has been fundamental to the structure, is ensconced. It is also at this point that Derrida refers us back, in a footnote, to *Politics of Friendship* and his analysis of the question of fraternity, which I have analysed above, in this chapter.⁶⁰⁵

Although Lacan often repeats that there is no other of the Other, although for Lévinas, to the contrary, from another point of view, the question of justice is born of this quest for the third party and an other of the other who would not be 'simply his fellow',⁶⁰⁶ one wonders whether the denied but common implication of these two discourses about the other and the third party does not situate at least one instance of the animal, of the animal-other, of the other *as animal*, of the other-living-mortal, of the nonfellow in any case, the nobrother [the divine or the animal, here inseparable], in short of the a-human in which god and animal form an alliance according to all the theozoomorphic possibilities properly constitutive of myths, religions, idolatries, and even the sacrificial practices of monotheisms that claim to break with idolatry.⁶⁰⁷

The animal, in other words, is the logical and structural *absolute other* of the human, for both Lévinas and Lacan. As I have shown above, in the analysis of *Politics of Friendship*, the third as animal, as absolutely other-than-human, is the only conclusion to Lévinas's ethics of the other,

⁶⁰⁴ Lévinas, *T.I.*, *op. cit.*, p.213.

⁶⁰⁵ Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, *op. cit.*

⁶⁰⁶ Derrida's note here refers us to back to Lévinas's 'Peace and Proximity', in which Lévinas asks himself what a third party would be that was both 'other than the neighbour', 'but also an other neighbour and also a neighbour of the other and not simply the other's fellow'. He points to the fact that Lévinas leaves the question open on 'the order of the interhuman' [Lévinas, E., 'Peace and Proximity', in Lévinas, E. *Basic Philosophical Writings*, ed. Adriaan T. Peperzak, Simon Critchley and Robert Bernasconi (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996), p. 168].

⁶⁰⁷ Derrida, *B.S.*, vol. 1, *op. cit.*, p. 126 [p. 177].

the only third-in-the-eyes-of-the-other, together with me and the other already. ‘The third party looks at me in the eyes of the Other.’⁶⁰⁸ One can picture a scene where the hunter and the hunted, beast and sovereign, look at each other, as in Lévinas’s scenario. Derrida has otherwise, visually, set the scene already, throughout *B.S.* With the third, who, I have demonstrated, through the analysis of the friend in Derrida’s *P.F.*, is always already there, politics is also there, as well as questions of justice.⁶⁰⁹ ‘What is Lacan doing’, Derrida asks, ‘when he posits “that the signifier demands an other place – the place of the Other, the Other witness, the witness other than any of the partners”?’⁶¹⁰ What is he doing, in other words, when he posits the necessity for an other that is *beyond* me and the other, otherwise of both beast and sovereign, animal and human? What is he doing when he posits the necessity for a third? Divinity and the animal, god and beast are one and the same with the signifier and the trace, of the same order, in that they are both inscribed within the schema of self and other to begin with, and efface themselves, place themselves *on the hither side of* in the same movement. The place of the other must be a-human, as Derrida, citing Lacan, calls it: ‘(...) one must break with all identification of an image of self, with any fellow living being, and therefore with all fraternity or human proximity,⁶¹¹ with all humanity. Must not this place of the Other be a-human?’⁶¹²

The double feint: ‘eating from the tree of knowledge to fall back into a state of innocence’⁶¹³

Tracing Derrida’s steps, the move to ‘thirdness’ is performed by bringing the structure of the trace to bear on the feint and feign dyad, thereby complicating the schema. Since the trace effaces itself, there is a self-effacement inscribed within the animal feint itself (the imprinting of a trace to ‘throw off track’)⁶¹⁴. The feint doubles *itself* into a feign, such that at the point of what Lacan took to be the first feint that not even he denied ‘the animal’ (the ‘generalised animal’, Derrida does not fail to admonish him),⁶¹⁵ the double gesture, trace and its own deletion, feint and its own feigning being feigned, are inscribed. ‘It is just as difficult’, writes Derrida, ‘to distinguish a frontier between feint and feigned feint, to draw an invisible line through the

⁶⁰⁸ Lévinas, *T.I.*, *op. cit.*, p.213.

⁶⁰⁹ See my section on *P. F.*, *op. cit.*, Chapter Three, above.

⁶¹⁰ Derrida, *B.S.*, vol. 1, *op. cit.*, pp. 126-127 [pp. 177-178].

⁶¹¹ A reference to Lévinas’s development of responsibility as most pressing when confronted with an other least ‘like me’, the Other other than my neighbour. See my Chapter Two.

⁶¹² Derrida, *B.S.*, vol. 1, *op. cit.*, pp. 126-127 [pp. 177-178].

⁶¹³ Kleist, ‘On the Marionette Theatre’, *op. cit.*

⁶¹⁴ Derrida, *B.S.*, vol. 1, *op. cit.*, pp. 126-127 [pp. 177-178].

⁶¹⁵ Derrida, *B.S.*, vol. 1, *op. cit.*, p. 130 [p. 182].

middle of a feigned feint, as it is to distinguish inscription from effacement of the trace.’⁶¹⁶ Derrida’s focus, here, is as much to destabilise the possibility of there being anything like a simple feint, for the animal or the human, with all its attendant consequences (animals being able to feign a feint by virtue of the feint feigning itself, or the trace effacing itself) as it is to deny the possibility of a sovereign self, human or animal. ‘Who will ever judge the efficacy of this gesture [the effacement of the trace]?’ Derrida asks.⁶¹⁷ Put differently, who is the who who will judge the trace? Derrida’s aim is no less than the dethronement of the master sovereign, the signifier, and, with it, of the concept of sovereignty itself. It is worth here quoting Derrida in full, since it is this thought which guides both years of his seminars on *The Beast and the Sovereign*, and constitutes one of the rare occasions where Derrida lists most of the attributes he sees the canon of Western philosophy as having denied what it took to be ‘the animal’:

It is less a matter of wondering whether one has the right to refuse the animal such and such a power (speech, reason, experience of death, mourning, culture, institution, politics, technique, clothing, lying, feigned feint, effacement of the trace, gift, laughter, tears, respect, etc. – the list is necessarily indefinite and the most powerful philosophical tradition in which we live has refused *all of that* to the ‘animal’). It is more a matter of wondering whether what one calls man has the right, for his own part, to attribute in all rigor to man, to attribute to himself, then, what he refuses to the animal, and whether he ever has a concept of it that is pure, rigorous, indivisible, as such.⁶¹⁸

Derrida’s gesture effects the beginning of a community, of animal and man, both powerless as a ‘who’ in the face of the self-effacing structure of the trace, a trace which inscribes both man and beast within each other, structurally, and opens the way to a ‘third’ who is always already there. The trace, in effacing and inscribing itself, doubles both man and beast, in a structure reminiscent of the analysis, above, of *Politics of Friendship*, and, concomitantly, of Levinas’s third-in-the-eyes-of-the-other-within-the-self.⁶¹⁹ The trace, the a-human, the ‘figure of divinanimality’, which is neither human, nor animal, nor god, is disclosed, *exposed*, as a quasi-transcendental signifier.⁶²⁰ It constitutes ‘the excluded, foreclosed, denied, tamed, sacrificed ground of what it grounds: namely, the symbolic order, the human order, the law, justice.’⁶²¹ What this move also effects, in aligning man and beast in a community of the living, is point to another beyond, a beyond of the other-than-life, and the other-than-animate, which Derrida

⁶¹⁶ Ibid.

⁶¹⁷ Ibid.

⁶¹⁸ Derrida, *B.S.*, vol. 1, *op. cit.*, p. 130 [p. 182].

⁶¹⁹ See Chapter 2.

⁶²⁰ Derrida, *B.S.*, vol. 1, *op. cit.*, p. 127 [p. 178].

⁶²¹ Ibid., p. 127 [p. 177].

comes back to in the analysis of the marionette and the corpse. A further move is performed in naming the ‘mother’ in the same string of terms: beast, sovereign, man, the Father, Law and the ‘Thing’:⁶²² ‘One could add the mother and it probably would change nothing.’⁶²³ Derrida comes back to the question of sexual difference through his analysis of marionettes, analysis which points the way to the development of the concept of a community in absolute difference and a community *of* those and *with* those beyond the living sphere. This is a community not merely between those alive (sovereign, beast, etc.) but also those not yet born and those no longer alive. Concomitantly, it opens the way to the question of a community with those not animated, other-than-animated, or on the hither side of life, of whom one marionette is an important figure. I have pursued the question of sexual difference above, in the analysis of *P.F.* I will now turn to Session Nine, and Derrida’s continuing exploration of the question of animality through the figure of the snake and Lévinas.

Does the Snake have a Face?⁶²⁴

‘And I thought of the albatross,

And I wished he would come back, my snake.’⁶²⁵

The ninth session of *The Beast and the Sovereign*, transcribed from a recording of it, is based on a poem by D. H. Lawrence, called ‘Snake’ and is, like Session Four, a place in which Derrida brings Lévinas to bear directly on the subject of the beast and the sovereign, humanity, animality and other-than. This time, the enquiry gravitates around Lévinas’s theory of the ‘face’ of the other, the other who faces me, from whom I, the ‘me’, receive the imperative ‘Thou shalt not kill’. The question of the title of this section, ‘Does a snake have a face?’, is a reference to the question asked of Lévinas by John Llewelyn in 1986: ‘Does the animal have a face?’⁶²⁶

⁶²² Ibid., p. 127 [p. 178].

⁶²³ Ibid.

⁶²⁴ See Derrida, Jacques *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, trans. David Wills (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), pp. 107-8].

⁶²⁵ Lawrence, D.H. ‘Snake’ in *D.H. Lawrence: Poems*, selected by Tom Paulin (U.K.: Faber and Faber, 2007), p. 86 ff.

⁶²⁶ Derrida offers two versions of this story. In version one, when asked by John Llewelyn ‘Can one say of the animal what you say of man in his ethical dimension? Does the animal have a face?’ Lévinas responds with ‘I don’t know. Would you say the snake has a face?’ (see *B.S.*, *op. cit.*, p. 237 [317]). In the other version, when asked the same question of whether the animal has a face, followed by ‘Can one read “Thou shalt not kill” in the eyes of an animal?’ Lévinas responds: ‘I don’t know if a snake has a face. I can’t answer that question. A more specific analysis is needed.’ (Derrida, Jacques, *The Animal that*

Derrida mentions this question in his lecture given at the 1997 Cerisy conference, *L'Animal Autobiographique*.⁶²⁷ Lévinas's response to the question is what intrigues Derrida and is taken up both in *B.S.*, Session Nine and in *The Animal That Therefore I am*.⁶²⁸ If, in *The Animal That Therefore I Am* Derrida explores similar questions in relation to Lévinas's answer, his hesitance on the question of the ethical imperative not to kill someone other than human, who might or might not have a face, in *B.S.* Derrida explores the question of ethical responsibility through D.H. Lawrence's poem. It is this Ninth Session of *B.S.* I will be focusing on.

Derrida approaches the question from another angle to *The Animal that Therefore I am*, focusing on the snake 'coming before me' at the water-trough and the question of the head, the sovereign's head, inextricably connected to matters of divinanimality.⁶²⁹ What Derrida is questioning is whether the human has a responsibility towards the animal even when, like a snake, it does not have a face or a head. Derrida also explores the Lévinasian question of the other coming 'before me' in the ethical order, since the snake that the protagonist of the poem encounters comes before him (both before his eyes and temporally before him) to drink water from the trough. Connected to the questions of primacy in ethics, response, responsibility and language is the question of sovereignty. The snake is portrayed as a king 'in exile', needing protection, an other vulnerable and destitute before the human whose water-trough it drinks from. Yet it is the snake's both god-like and animal status, its *divinanimality*, as Derrida has called it, in Session Four,⁶³⁰ which prompts the desire to kill it. This sovereignty and the snake's turning its back on the protagonist ['(...) a sort of horror (...) / Overcame me now his back was turned', 'And looked around like a god, unseeing, into the air']⁶³¹ its refusing to respond, its *inability* to respond *in the same language* is also what prompts the protagonist to throw a log at it. The temptation to kill the other who comes before me is there before the snake, *my snake*, has come *before* me, vulnerable, to drink from my water-trough, before, as Lévinas would say, he has entered my home and appeared in front of me.⁶³² In the other's facing the protagonist of the

Therefore I am, *op. cit.*, pp. 107-108) The exchange is reproduced by John Llewelyn in *The Middle Voice of Ecological Conscience: A chiasmic reading of responsibility in the neighbourhood of Lévinas, Heidegger and others* (U.K.: Palgrave Macmillan, 1991), in his chapter 'Who is my neighbour?', p. 66.

⁶²⁷ Derrida, Jacques *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, trans. David Wills (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), pp. 107-8].

⁶²⁸ Ibid.

⁶²⁹ Derrida, *B.S.*, *op. cit.*, p. 127 [p. 177].

⁶³⁰ Ibid.

⁶³¹ Lawrence, D.H. 'Snake', cited in Derrida, *B.S.*, *op. cit.*, p. 248.

⁶³² This is because the other's facing me is, as I have shown in Chapter 2, never merely an empirical event.

poem and his attempt to murder him, we have not only the play between beast and sovereign, man and animal, with its attendant complications in the snake being both destitute and ‘a king’, but the beginning of something like a community. For, it is the very gesture of murder that aims at both the other-than-human as radically, absolutely different and, in the same step, designates him as ‘my fellow’ (Lacan’s *semblable*, as we have seen above). As Derrida puts it, ‘we need to reread the Bible, because, at bottom, the one to be sorriest for in this whole story is the snake.’⁶³³ Significantly, the term ‘to commune’ has powerful implications for the Christian tradition,⁶³⁴ in the practice of Holy Communion, in which the snake partakes, *as* part of that community. This is a community which inscribes itself in the facing of human and snake in the poem, and speaks through him, a moral tradition whose ‘voices’ he decides to follow when throwing the log at the snake, to kill it. The third, politics, society, community are already there, in the facing of other-than-human and man. The snake is both invited, allowed to drink, and invites itself. It is both expunged, chased away with a log, and expunges itself, through its own nature, its *divinanimality*, its god-like features and status. The possibility of a community, like Law and ethics, this being-with-the-other-than-human is there already, before the murder, but appears, as such, *gathers itself for a moment*, as Derrida might say, after the event.⁶³⁵ This concludes our enquiry so far. We shall now turn to the Conclusion and some further suggestion for research avenues.

⁶³³ Derrida, *B.S.*, *op. cit.*, p. 246.

⁶³⁴ Commune, v., *The Oxford English Dictionary*, Second Edition, 1989, O.E.D. Online, Oxford University Press, 6 May 2014, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/37298?rskey=bvooSn&result=3#eid>.

⁶³⁵ Derrida, *B.S.*, *op. cit.*, p. 245 [p. 327-328].

V. Conclusion

This study has been divided into three parts. Part One briefly sketched the notion of the question, the call of conscience and singularity through an engagement with Derrida's reading of these phenomena in Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time*. The analysis in Chapter One has been staged with an eye to Lévinas, since it is through Lévinas that Derrida engages with Heidegger's text. I argued that an investigation into Heidegger's concepts of the question and the call, which are the target of Derrida's critique, *opens the way* into the understanding of subjectivity as the Lévinasian other-within-the-same. The question and the call have also been read as providing the chiasmus for Derrida's development of *différance* and singularity as based on the non-identity of the self with itself.

After a brief incursion into what I took to be the context of the development of singularity in Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time*, I traced Derrida's trajectory in his examination of the question of community of singularities through Emmanuel Lévinas's work. I analysed the relation between ethics and politics through three main Lévinasian texts: 'The Ego and the Totality', *Totality and Infinity* and *Otherwise Than Being, or Beyond Essence* and concluded that it should be understood as marked by a mutually-interruptive dynamic. Contrary to dominant scholarship arguing that Lévinas's work undergoes something akin to a shift with *Otherwise than Being*, in that politics is broached directly, I argued that, with *O.B.*, Lévinas is shifting perspective and presenting what has always been a mutually-disruptive relation between ethics and politics, peace and war, from a different point of view, one which also requires him to place the emphasis on the need for a different vocabulary, one not available to phenomenology. A discussion of Lévinas's 'Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism' has served to introduce Lévinas's early, positive development of the self's being riveted to its own body and the beginnings of a thinking on community that would continue throughout Lévinas's entire writing career. I have then developed these questions through an analysis of *On Escape* and *Existence and Existents*.

Throughout this study, I have been problematising the methodological and philosophical need for the use of a different vocabulary, especially as resulting from a Lévinasian and Derridean analysis of the self-other relation. I have contended that both Derrida and Lévinas could be understood as working on the margins of phenomenology, in that, in the wake of Heidegger's

and Nietzsche's work, they are continuously placing the language of phenomenology in question.⁶³⁶

Chapter Two problematised the Lévinasian 'passage' from ethics to politics, by proposing that the aforementioned 'leap' between ethics and politics need not be perceived as an intractable difficulty, marking the apolitical nature of Lévinasian ethics, but, instead, requires renewed attention and analysis. Against accounts that the culmination of Lévinas's work in *Otherwise than Being* leads to political quietude, I argued that a re-examination of the relation between ethics and politics evinces it as mutually-interruptive, with the political, in *O.B.*, being set up as a necessary disruptive supplement at the heart of ethics, just as ethics had been conceptualised as a disruptive force at the heart of war and politics in *Totality and Infinity*. I have shown how a 'leap' from one sphere to the other could not be understood correctly as such, were one to take into account Lévinas's development of the self-other relation and the third. The relation between the self and Other, and the manner in which Lévinas weaves the figure of the third into that dynamic, also transforms the common understanding of time as linear.

One reason for the assumption that Lévinas prioritises ethics over politics and later, with his turn to politics, simply moves from one sphere to the other has been, in part, due to the choice in the order of treatment of the two concepts in places like *O.B.*, which always prioritise ethics. However, as I have shown, were we to take into account what Lévinas writes about time, it would be impossible to claim that there is any such thing as a linear temporal structure to, say, the phenomenological order of how things appear. Inasmuch as most of Lévinas's work is directed against both the Husserlian concept of the ego as an entity aiming towards transparency to self and the Heideggerian project on the primacy of Dasein, time, too, as a major tenet of the phenomenological analysis, emerges significantly altered in Lévinas's treatment of it.

Chapter Three has followed the trace of Lévinas throughout Derrida's *Politics of Friendship* and revealed the Lévinasian concepts of the other-within-the-same and the third to underlie the conceptual structure of Derrida's argument. I argued that *Politics of friendship* should be understood as a text on Lévinas, in spite of its structure being based around an engagement with thinkers other than Lévinas. The analysis focused on *Politics of Friendship*, though *Points...* and other works have also surfaced as alternative places for the argument, or as places where Derrida continues the argument opened by *Politics of Friendship*. The second part of Chapter Three has focused on the question of animality and a development of the notion of the other-

⁶³⁶ For an analysis of how Heidegger, Lévinas and Derrida are working within phenomenology, but also on its margins, see Simon Glendinning *In the Name of Phenomenology* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007).

within-the-self as otherwise-than-human. I have taken this to be the conclusion that both Lévinas's and Derrida's thinking on alterity leads to.

Derridean singularity emerged, having passed through Lévinasian transformations, as a self inherently split at its core, a self the other rends and renders heterogenous from within. This heterogeneity is what I suggested could be referred to as alteronomy, since the Lévinasian and Derridean analysis of the subject also complicates the understanding of it as a free and autonomous being. The term alteronomy has also been employed in order to eschew the problematic dyad between autonomy and heteronomy.

This study has also been intended to contribute to the debate, extending over a considerable number of years, over the function of deconstruction, and whether one could speak of it as having any ethical import, on the one hand, and political import on the other. Commentators have generally been split between those who see Derrida's work as continuing the Lévinasian legacy, and thus having little to offer to the political, and those who would like to divorce the trajectory of deconstruction from the Lévinasian heritage, and thus reveal it as being inherently political. The above split in interpretation is largely based on the divergence of interpretation of Lévinas's own writings as essentially about ethics, and therefore as either having little to offer to the political, or as undergoing something like a 'split' with the focus coming to rest more clearly on politics through the figure of the third, in later writings, such as *Otherwise than Being, or Beyond Essence*.

In this study, I have argued from two main positions: a) that Lévinas's own work can convincingly be interpreted as not only *concerned* with the political from his earliest writings, but as a weaving of politics within ethics, as the interruptive element, and b) Derrida's own writing need not be 'divorced' from Lévinas's trajectory of thought, in order to be considered as having something to offer to our re-thinking of the relation between ethics and politics.

I have argued that Lévinas's writing does not undergo a shift, but changes perspective in the presentation of the two sides of the same argument, in spite of it looking, on the surface, as if he prioritises ethics. The political is set up as an interruptive force within the ethical in his earliest writings and the ethical an interruptive force within the political in his later work. Throughout his work, Lévinas is providing a radically new definition of subjectivity, which might be seen as launching an ethical *quasi-phenomenology* of the subject.

One central aim of this study has been to attempt a re-conceptualisation of ethics and politics away from the tired structure of singularity versus community, particularity or individuality versus universality, as well as from the tired dyadic positioning of these sets of terms. I have foregrounded a recent, though much overlooked notion within Jacques Derrida's work, as an

alternative to thinking being-with: that of community of singularities. I have also suggested the notions of *alteronomy* and *f(r)iendship* as alternatives to thinking being-with which take into account the way in which the other-within-the-self restructures the concept of freedom and takes it beyond a humanist context.

In the suggestion for further research, I sketch a few avenues along which this study might be taken. One such avenue is opened by the following series of questions: What would the possibility of an Other that is otherwise than human mean for Lévinas's ethics of the face-to-face? Would the community of friends who are not necessarily human open to the way to an enquiry into the concept of friendship as *f(iend)ship* [f(r)iendship], as the animal-enemy-within-the-other-that-I-am? I have briefly sketched how such an enquiry might begin with Derrida's meditations on animality and mourning and raise the possibility, by bringing the two ideas together, that mourning might concern an other-than-human-within-me.

Another direction into which the question of community of singularities might be pursued is the exploration of what the Lévinasian concepts of the third, the other-within-the-self, and the third-in-the-eyes-of-the-other-within-the-self might mean for the Anglo-Saxon liberal tradition. I have suggested that this other possible study could stage an engagement between the corresponding notions of singularity and individuality, since these two concepts form the structure for any attempt to address one of the most pressing philosophical problems facing any democratic, cosmopolitan culture: the question of the individual's responsibilities towards, and quality of engagement with, 'the other'.

Further Development

Another direction into which the question of community of singularities might be pursued, aside from the direction of animality and mourning, outlined above, is the exploration of what the Lévinasian concepts of the third, the other-within-the-self, and the third-in-the-eyes-of-the-other-within-the-self might mean for the Anglo-Saxon liberal tradition. Liberalism otherwise punctuates Lévinas's writings, from as early as 'Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism'⁶³⁷ and 'The Ego and the Totality',⁶³⁸ up until the end, with *Otherwise than Being*⁶³⁹ and others. Lévinas never ceases to enquire, throughout his writing, about the importance of the grounding

⁶³⁷ See: 'We must ask ourselves if liberalism is all we need to achieve an authentic dignity for the human subject.' in *R.H.*, *op. cit.*, preface and *passim*.

⁶³⁸ Lévinas, 'The Ego and the Totality', in *Collected Philosophical Papers*, *op. cit.*

⁶³⁹ Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity*, *op. cit.*

of the ‘just State in which the European is fulfilled’ in war or peace.⁶⁴⁰ This is, of course, another engagement with Thomas Hobbes, an important figure, as previously mentioned, against whose writings Lévinas’s own are always pitched. The liberal state and its commitment to justice as responsibility for the other remains, throughout Lévinas’s writings, the political form most promising of a relational engagement with the other.

It is not without importance to know—and this is perhaps the European experience of the twentieth century—whether the egalitarian and just State in which the European is fulfilled—and which it is a matter...above all of preserving—proceeds from a war of all against all—or from the irreducible responsibility of the one for the other.⁶⁴¹

This would also pave the way for an engagement between the Anglo-Saxon liberal tradition and Derrida’s work. Despite Derrida’s enormous prestige within Anglophone literary studies, very little scholarly work has investigated the potential relationships between deconstruction and the central tradition of Anglo-Saxon political theory: classical liberalism and its contemporary variants. A possible project might stage a critical and comparative study of the two major currents of contemporary thought. This project could stage an engagement between the corresponding notions of singularity and individuality, since these two concepts form the structure for any attempt to address one of the most pressing philosophical problems facing any democratic, cosmopolitan culture: the question of the individual’s responsibilities towards and quality of engagement with ‘the other’.

In spite of their apparent differences, Derrida’s work and classical liberal thought share both strengths and weaknesses which the study might seek to highlight and remedy. In particular, it could investigate their relative ability to think through the possibilities of engagement *between* individuals and to develop concepts of mutual responsibility adequate to the complexity of twenty first century societies. One such focus might be the liberal prioritisation of the individual over the collective, and the comparable yet contrasting emphasis placed by Derrida on the singular. These two sets of priorities are both analogous and contrasting in ways which the study could draw out and illuminate, drawing on the observations that the ideal of a community of singularities is notably evocative of classical liberalism. This is in spite of the fact that the concept of the singular is often understood as antithetical to the classical idea of individuality, and despite the fact that both are sometimes understood as marking the point of rupture of any possible community. The positive aim of this other enquiry would be to undertake a

⁶⁴⁰ Lévinas, ‘Peace and Proximity’, trans., Peter Atterton and Simon Critchley, in Adrian Peperzak, Simon Critchley, and Robert Bernasconi (eds.), *Emmanuel Lévinas: Basic Philosophical Writings* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: University of Indiana Press, 1996), p.169.

⁶⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 169.

reconsideration of such liberal concepts as law, justice and right in the light of the sustained critical engagement between the liberal idea of the individual and the idea of singularity, as developed by Lévinas and Derrida.

A yet more normative aspect of this project might deal with the political applicability of community of singularities, through a reconsideration of the concept of liberal individualism. It could attempt to construct a political philosophy based on the transformation of the concept of individualism through the structure of community of singularities, for the purpose of thinking through the possibilities of a more relational engagement with the Other. Though liberalism is by no means a homogenous political philosophy, it is a basic view shared by all its forms that ‘the good of the individual is the main focus of moral theory and social, economic and political institutions.’⁶⁴² It would be a premise of the project that liberalism’s failure to deliver its promise of freedom, equality and social justice is a residue of its unrelenting commitment to individualism.

Liberalism tends to be identified with a set of beliefs informed by a conception of the abstract and asocial individual, and is firmly committed to the belief in the intrinsic and ultimate *value* of each individual. It is a tradition that ‘sees equality as a formal and legal concept and that limits the role of the state to the public sphere.’⁶⁴³ Liberalism’s commitment to the moral, ontological and epistemic value of the individual rests on a metaphysically reductionist thesis of the atomisation of society. As such, it asserts that ‘the compositional units of the whole are ontologically *prior* to the whole, that is, the units and their properties exist before and are more real than the whole’.⁶⁴⁴ Since it presupposes the existence of already-constituted individuals as political subjects, liberal political philosophy tends to overlook the constitution of the subject not merely as inter-subjective, but as relational in the Lévinasian and Derridean sense investigated in this study. The possibilities and mediations involved in such a conceptualisation, without dispensing with the important insights liberalism has to offer, would be the reconstructive project of this other avenue of enquiry.

Methodologically, this other prospective study would facilitate a dialogue between phenomenology and political thought and thus constitute a multi-faceted approach to an enquiry that would never be satisfactorily undertaken while maintaining an exclusionary approach. Eschewing such an openness will always be bound to the ethically questionable logic (and the

⁶⁴² Maureen Ramsay, *What’s Wrong With Liberalism? A Radical Critique of Liberal Philosophy* (London: Continuum Studies in Political Thought, 1997), p.4.

⁶⁴³ Ramsay, *What’s Wrong With Liberalism?* *op. cit.*, p. 8.

⁶⁴⁴ Ramsay, *What’s Wrong With Liberalism?* *op. cit.*, p.8, emphasis added.

‘depressing prospect’) of ‘reading the other’.⁶⁴⁵ The underlying premise of this methodological approach would, therefore, not be that a lamentably broken ‘bridge’ between the two ‘categories’ must be rebuilt, but that the very ideas are inexistent, and had been inscribed within, *written into* the logic of the two traditions of thought that they should form constitutive parts of one another.⁶⁴⁶

⁶⁴⁵ Glendinning, *The Idea of Continental Philosophy*, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

⁶⁴⁶ The claim is not that in the practice of the above ‘modes’ of philosophising, as Glendinning acknowledges in *The Idea of Continental Philosophy*, *op. cit.*, there has been no real fissure, but that such a conception was always one that is logically ethically and historically erroneous.

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